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ABSTRACT

Twenty-nine members of a manufacturing organization were interviewed to learn how they identified, evaluated, and responded to what they perceived as significant changes in their organization. A grounded theory approach was used to analyze the interview transcripts. A model of the process of organizational change was constructed from emergent categories. It consisted of three time periods: anticipatory interval, event interval, and postevent interval. During the anticipatory interval, individuals scanned the environment to learn of future events. They discussed these events with others and evaluated them based on the following: (1) the probability that the event would affect them; (2) how much control they had over the event; (3) what they had to gain or lose because of the event; and (4) what resources they had to help cope with the event. Based on this anticipatory analysis, people engaged in actions to help them manage the stress created by the impending change and alter the course of the identified event. Twenty-four types of coping actions were identified. The length of the anticipatory and event intervals influenced the level of stress experienced. During the postevent interval, participants assessed effects of identified changes. Evaluations were based on four factors: (1) the effect the event had on participants' probability of being affected by future events; (2) amount of control participants had over future events; (3) what was actually gained and lost because of the change; and (4) perceived fairness of the event. (Appendixes include 76 references and the interview guide.) (Author/YLB)

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TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTER

Project Number Fifty

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE TO ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: A GROUNDED MODEL

Barry-Craig Paul Johansen

June 1991

university of minnesota
DEPARTMENT OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION • ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to explore how individuals identified, evaluated, and responded to organizational changes. Twenty-nine members of a manufacturing organization were interviewed, in-depth, to learn how they identified, evaluated, and responded to what they perceived as significant changes in their organization.

A grounded theory approach was used to analyze the interview transcripts. Emergent categories were then used to construct a model of the process of organizational change.

The model consists of three time periods: (a) the anticipatory interval, (b) the event interval, and (c) the postevent interval. During the anticipatory interval, individuals scan the environment to learn of future events. They discuss these events with others and evaluate them based on the probability that the event will affect them, how much control they have over the event, what they have to gain or lose because of the event, and what resources they have to help them cope with the event.

Based on this anticipatory analysis, people engage in actions to help them manage the stress created by the impending change and alter the course of the identified event. Twenty-four different types of coping actions are identified. The length of the anticipatory and event intervals influences the level of stress experienced by the participants.

During the postevent interval, participants assess the effects of the identified changes. These evaluations are based on (a) the effect the event has on participants' probability of being affected by future events; (b) the amount of control participants' have over future events; (c) what was actually gained and lost because of the change; and (d) the perceived fairness, or justice, of the event.

In general, this research is supported by findings from the fields of organizational psychology, bereavement theory, and management science.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM

Advancements in technology, developments in the emerging world marketplace, shifts in the demographics and social fabric of the nation, and a host of other factors are causing drastic upheavals and changes in the workplace, as evidenced by mergers, acquisitions, buy-outs, takeovers, explosive growth, and "downsizing." Change is costly in terms of money (Cascio, 1987; Mirvis & Lawler III, 1977; Smith, 1977) and the physical and psychological health of the members of the organization who experience the change (Leana, 1988; Levin, 1984; Marks & Mirvis, 1985; Marris, 1974). In a report on stress in the workplace, the Northwestern National Life Insurance Company (1991) found that 72% of the workers in its sample reported frequent stress-related conditions that could increase health-care costs and that major changes in the workplace were directly related to these conditions. The average cost of rehabilitating an employee who was disabled because of stress was estimated to be $1,925. Although the emotional and psychological toll of stress cannot be quantified, it is clearly substantial.

A better understanding of the change process is the first step toward reducing the costs and the emotional distress caused by organizational change. Organization development is concerned with organizational change. Indeed, some have argued convincingly that change is the business of organization development (Fullan, Miles, & Taylor, 1980; Golembiewski, 1989).

A number of authors have proposed various models and strategies to explain and manage the change process (Alveras & Frigeri, 1987; Bianco & Stadter, 1987; Bridges, 1988; Woodward & Buchholz, 1987). Many are based on Kurt Lewin's (1958) three-step model of change (unfreezing, movement, freezing), although this model is now coming under attack as not fitting during times of rapid change. Although these theories and prescriptions are appealing and logical and have face validity, few are research based. This is not surprising. As Passmore (1987) points out:

> The effects of change on employees are most often defined as the products of psychic conflict and are manifested through somatic, psychic, or behavioral symptoms. The problem is that the conflict is defined and perceived uniquely by the employee and is not general. In practice, the conflict is difficult to identify objectively and to link unambiguously as the cause of the symptoms. For instance, are job loss, location transfer, corporate merger, and budget cutting (or the threat of any of these) always stressors to the workers?
>
> Most statements about the negative effects of change on employees are not confirmable by logic alone. Nor are they confirmable by observation of individuals in organizations whose business is business, not experimentation. Consequently, these statements more often resemble superstition than fact. Furthermore, as superstition, they become currency for the brokers of 'voodoo' organizational development strategies. (p. 22)

No organization is immune from the forces requiring change. The change process is expensive, both financially and in terms of the psychological effect on people. Although a number of models of the change process and prescriptive actions to reduce the associated trauma have been offered, there is a need for a better understanding of the process people undergo when facing organizational change. Such an understanding will lead to the development of more effective methods to reduce the financial and psychological costs of organizational change.

Statement of the Problem

This study addressed the following question: How do members of an organization identify, evaluate, and respond to organizational change?

The study was designed to learn what events members of an organization identify as significant change events and if different events are seen as significant by different subgroups in the organization. The study was also designed to learn how members of the organization evaluate the identified events, how they react to them, and if there were differences among subgroups within the organization.

The desired end product was a grounded theory of the response of individuals to organizational change.

Significance of the Study

The following research, conducted within a manufacturing facility, provides a description and categorization of the facility's significant change events and the reactions to these events by the people involved. These descriptions and categories were further refined into a theory of how people react to organizational change. The study was designed to contribute to the evolving body of research literature in organization development through the development of a theory of organizational change. Generation rather than verification of theory was the goal. Furthermore, it was expected that this study, along with continuing research in other organizations and settings, would contribute to further development and refinement of a theory of organizational change. If the findings of this study are not verified by future research, then the theory will be defined as situational, that is, specific to the organization at this time, or as a "middle range theory" (Weick, 1989).

A better understanding of the organizational change process may offer guidance on where and when to concentrate efforts to minimize the trauma of change. This information will help trainers, organization development specialists, managers, and change agents to develop more effective training programs and interventions to deal with organizational change. It will benefit vocational educators in the development of curricula to help students understand and prepare to deal with change in the workplace. Through a better understanding of the change process, change agents will be able to reduce the pecuniary costs as well as the emotional and psychological trauma associated with change.

Significance of the Research Method

The grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used. Grounded theory is an approach used to generate theory, not to verify existing theory. A grounded theory consists of two types of elements: conceptual categories and their properties, and the relationships between the categories and the properties. These elements are indicated by the data; they are not the data themselves.

> In discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept. (Glaser, 1967, p, 23)

The constant comparison of data from the participants leads to the emergence of lower level categories early in the study. Higher level concepts and relationships become clear later in the coding and analysis of the data.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that the emergence of theory from the data resolves problems of forcing data to fit preconceived categories and problems of relevance and richness. In fact, they advocate the collection of initial data without a review of the literature so as to prevent contamination of the emergent categories by preconceived notions.

The Structure of this Dissertation

The admonition to delay the literature review until the initial data were collected and preliminary categories had emerged is reflected in the structure of this dissertation. Rather than follow the traditional five-chapter format (problem statement, literature review, methodology, analysis, conclusions), this dissertation is ordered to mirror the actual grounded theory research process. Hence, the comparisons between the findings of this study and the literature are found toward the end of the dissertation after the sections on the problem statement, methodology, and analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the data collection and analysis procedures used to generate the grounded theory as described in Chapter I. Included are descriptions and rationale for the selection of the research technique, the research site, the data collection techniques, the participants, and the methods used to analyze the data.

Grounded Theory

There are many definitions of what constitutes a theory. Bacharach (1989) gives a number of definitions:

> A theory is a statement of relations among concepts within a set of boundary assumptions and constraints. It is no more than a linguistic device used to organize a complex empirical world (p. 496).
>
> Researchers can define a theory as a statement of relationships between units observed or approximated in the empirical world. Approximated units mean constructs, which by their very nature cannot be observed directly (e.g., centralization, satisfaction, or culture). Observed units mean variables, which are operationalized empirically by measurement. A theory may be viewed as a system of constructs and variables in which the constructs are related to each other by propositions and the variables are related to each other by hypotheses. The whole system is bounded by the theorist's assumptions. (p. 498)

Sutherland (1975) offers a similar definition: "By theory we mean an ordered set of assertions about a generic behavior or structure assumed to hold throughout a significantly broad range of specific instances" (p. 9). Gioia and Pitre (1990) state: "We broadly define theory as any coherent description or explanation of observed or experienced phenomena" (p. 587).

A grounded theory is a theory that is inductively derived from the study of the data the theory represents (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is based in the comparative analysis of data.

Comparative analysis can serve a number of functions. It may be used to ensure accurate evidence, to establish the generality of propositions, to specify concepts, to verify theory, or to generate theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). All theory construction involves the comparative analysis of data. Data from one group are compared with data from another group, and the similarities and differences become the basis for analysis. Theory construction is the generation of concepts and statements of relationships between concepts within defined parameters. It is a process of "sensemaking" (Weick, 1989, p. 517).

A grounded theory consists of two types of elements: conceptual categories and their properties, and relationships among the categories and their properties. A category is a conceptual element of the theory. A property is a dimension of the category and its relationships. For example, the category of change might have the properties (dimensions) of: (a) scale, what size group was affected; (b) rate, how long it took for the change to happen; and (c) frequency, how often the change took place. The data are used to create the categories and the properties. The categories and properties, which are abstractions that emerge from the data, are used to build the theory.

Assumptions

Grounded theory methodology is interpretive in nature and, as such, shares many assumptions with other interpretive methods. A number of researchers have used interpretive approaches to understand organizations.

Organizations are seen as social constructs, that is, they exist because people share an agreement that they exist. They are created by the interpretations of individual members and are mediated through social interaction. Through this interaction, individuals create and come to share a common understanding about the nature of the organization. This common understanding, the dominant reality of the group, becomes the basis for individuals to make sense of their personal interpretations. This implies that, rather than rely on her or his own interpretations and operationalizations of constructs, the researcher must elicit from the members of the organization the constructs, interpretations, and associated meanings. As Gioia and Pitre (1990) explain:

> The interpretive paradigm is based on the view that people socially and symbolically construct and sustain their own organizational realities. The goal of theory building in the interpretive paradigm is to generate descriptions, insights, and explanations of events so that the system of interpretations and meaning, and the structuring and organizing processes, are revealed. (p. 588)

Interpretive studies assume that organization members actively create the reality they inhabit (Gioia & Poole, 1986) and that they share a common frame of reference. This frame of reference is created through social interaction and becomes the consensual or dominant reality of the group. Individual frames of reference exist within this collectivity (Weick, 1982; Weick & Bougon, 1986). Managers' views are especially crucial as they are often at the center of change (Bennis & Naus, 1985; Daft & Weick, 1984; Prahalad & Bettis, 1986). Individual and collective interpretations are made after events have transpired (Gephart, 1984; Weick, 1988), that is; meaning cannot be gleaned from an event until after the event is over and can be examined retrospectively. These assumptions are consistent with the methodology employed by other researchers using an interpretive approach (Cameron & Whetten, 1981).

Treating organizational reality as the result of social enactment has a number of important implications for the researcher in developing theory. It brings into question the legitimacy of the researcher's interpretations and operationalizations of constructs that organization members use to evaluate their experiences. It argues for an emic view (Pelto & Pelto, 1970); that is, that the researcher must elicit from members of the organization the constructs and the meanings of these constructs to understand their behavior (Bacharach, 1989; Bougon, Weick, & Binkhorst, 1977; Cameron & Whetten, 1981; Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Gray, Gougon, & Donnellon, 1985; Isabella, 1986; Isabella, personal communication, 3/2/90; Layder, 1982; Sanders, 1982). Hence, researchers must eschew a priori theorizing and rely on the research process to allow the theory to emerge from the data (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Layder, 1982; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As Glaser and Strauss (1967) state:

> In short, our focus on the emergence of categories solves the problems of fit, relevance, forcing, and richness. An effective strategy is, at first, literally to ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated by concepts more suited to different areas. Similarities and convergences with the literature can be established after the analytic core of categories has emerged. (p. 37)

Procedures

Statistics provide positivistic researchers with a standardized set of methods and tools to analyze and communicate research findings. There is no such standardized set of tools for interpretive work. Hence, it is easy to become quickly overwhelmed by the task of organizing and making sense out of qualitative data (Miles, 1979). Patton (1990) describes a number of methods for organizing and analyzing qualitative data. Miles and Huberman (1984) also present a number of techniques for the organization and analysis of qualitative data with an emphasis on the use of data displays and graphics.

The grounded theory method was described in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss and later elaborated upon by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The development of grounded theory is a method of comparative analysis, and the steps in the process are not discrete. Data collection and analysis are concurrent. New data are constantly compared with collected data and the process is iterative. It must be remembered that the purpose is the generation of new theory from data, not the validation of existing theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that "Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research" (p. 6). This approach is very similar to what Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to as a "constructivist" method.

Theoretical Sensitivity

A concept central to the development of grounded theory is theoretical sensitivity. As a grounded theory is developed by the researcher based upon his or her understandings and analysis, the analysis and resulting theory are heavily dependent on how well the researcher is able to find emerging themes and patterns in the data. Theoretical sensitivity is a personal characteristic of the researcher and indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning in data. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain that "Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't" (p. 42). As such, theoretical sensitivity is a product of the researcher's professional and personal experience. It is constantly evolving through the course of human development. The analytic process in developing theory contributes to the development of theoretical sensitivity as the researcher constantly asks questions about the data and reflects on their meanings. Such sensitivity is endangered if the researcher commits to any preconceived notions or dogmas. Total naivete is neither possible nor desirable. As research is disciplined inquiry, it is necessary to have some starting point to be able to seek and recognize meaningful information. It is, perhaps, a matter of degree. The researcher must remain open to alternate explanations and frameworks.

The development of theory is a creative process. The researcher must not only think creatively but must also remain sufficiently free of biases and assumptions (both recognized and unrecognized) in generating theory from the data. This delicate balance can be fostered through periodic reflection on the data collection process and consultation with others. An attitude of healthy skepticism is useful, and all findings should be regarded as provisional until repeatedly confirmed. The researcher should pay close attention to her or his own emotional reactions to the research process and guard against the tendency to force data to fit the theory. A grounded theory emerges from the data. If data and theory do not fit, it is the theory which must be reconsidered, not the data. Finally, adherence to the research procedures helps avoid personal biases and assumptions from influencing the data analysis process. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), "Good science (good theory) is produced through this interplay of creativeness and the skills acquired through training" (p. 47).

Selection of the Research Site

As this research concerned organizational change, it was desirable to work with an organization that had experienced considerable change in the recent past. The host organization was selected based on its location, willingness to participate in the research, and recent history of organizational changes. Entry into the organization was gained through personal contact with a vice-president who met with the researcher to discuss the proposal in detail and agreed to support and take the proposal to the president for approval. The president approved if the researcher would guarantee total anonymity for the organization and its employees. The details of this agreement and operational decisions about the project were coordinated through the organization's human resources department. After a number of discussions, a contract was developed stating that the researcher would not reveal the organization's identity, the identity of any of the participants, nor any information that would allow the organization to be identified.

Furthermore, the organization required the right of first review of this dissertation, and any derivative works, prior to publication to insure that the content would not allow identification of the organization or be inimical to the organization's interests. After lengthy discussion and meetings with the author's research advisor and legal counsel, the agreement was signed. Although this agreement sounds confining, in fact the company was extremely cooperative and allowed the researcher unrestricted access to employees and all parts of the manufacturing facility. However, in accordance with the agreement, all references to specific names, places, and events have been modified or omitted. The data remain true and accurate.

Rationale for the Selection of Participants

As this research was designed to develop rather than confirm theory, the plan for selecting participants was purposeful rather than statistical. Participants were selected to insure the inclusion of a wide range of viewpoints and experience from all levels and functions within the organization. As Patton (1990) has said:

> Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases (n=1), selected purposefully. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. (pp. 169, 171)

Maximum variation sampling, a type of purposeful sampling, attempts to capture the central issues and themes from across the organization. According to Patton (1990), "Any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts of a program" (p. 172). This approach is congruent with what Glaser and Strauss (1967) term theoretical sampling: "The principal point to keep clear is the purpose of the research, so that rules of evidence will not hinder discovery of theory" (p. 51).

To ensure that the data collected were not idiosyncratic to a particular organizational function or level, participants were selected who represented a wide diversity of functions and levels within the organizational hierarchy.

Selection of Participants

Before agreeing to participate in this study, the host organization needed to know how many of its people would be interviewed. It was estimated that a total of 30 participants would be required to reach saturation and allow people from all functions and levels to participate. This number was based on a review of other, similar research studies and the size of the host organization. Participants were required to have a tenure of at least five years with the organization, as this would ensure that they had been with the organization long enough to have experienced a number of changes. Public documents indicated that the organization had experienced a number of changes within that time. Both sexes were adequately represented. Appendix A shows the distribution of participants by organizational level, function, gender, and, where appropriate, product.

The host organization required that the initial contact with potential participants be made by the human resources department (HR). The researcher and a representative of the department met to discuss the levels and functional areas of the desired participants one week before the interviews were to be conducted. The HR representative then contacted a number of employees who met the criteria, explained the purpose and nature of the interviews, and asked if they were willing to participate. Participation was voluntary, but the participants were selected, not volunteers. If the employee was willing to be interviewed, the appropriate manager was contacted and arrangements were made for the employee to be released from work duties to attend the interview. The HR representative then developed an initial schedule of interviews, made room arrangements, and sent a copy of the schedule to the researcher four days in advance of the first interview. Upon completion of the first set of scheduled interviews, the researcher again met with the HR representative to determine the schedule for the following week. This process was repeated until 29 employees had been interviewed over the course of 5 weeks. One employee who was scheduled to participate late in the data collection process canceled the interview and could not be rescheduled. As theoretical saturation had been reached, this was deemed not to be a problem.

All participants interviewed were employed by the organization at the time of the project. This means that all of them had "survived" changes in the organization, and, hence, the interview data did not include interviews from people who had left the organization during or because of the events described. The host organization was not willing to provide the researcher with access to people who had left the organization, citing concerns about confidentiality and security. This is a constraint and will be addressed in the chapter dealing with results.

Data Collection

As the grounded theory approach requires limited prior understanding and knowledge of the salient concepts, relationships, or categories, the data collection instrument must be highly flexible and able to enter the research situation without a great deal of a priori knowledge. It must be able to distinguish relevant from irrelevant data and concentrate on the relevant. In this regard, Guba and Lincoln (1989) conclude:

> The human is the instrument of choice for the constructivist, and, it should be noted, the only possible choice during the early stages of an inquiry. Objections that humans are subjective, biased, or unreliable are irrelevant, for there is no other option. (p. 175)

Hence, face-to-face interviews were selected as the only method that offered the needed flexibility to collect the data of interest.

Interview Guide

An interview guide was developed for the interview process following the suggestions of McCracken (1988). This guide served a number of functions. It insured that, at the start of each interview, there was consistency as the researcher provided each participant with information about the nature of the research, issues of anonymity and informed consent, and the interview procedure. It ensured consistency in presentation and in the order of presentation of questions while allowing the pursuit of salient information generated in the course of the interview. Whereas a truly open-ended interview could have expanded in an infinite number of directions, the guide served to keep the interview focused or on-track. It also provided the researcher with a number of prompts to help in the further exploration and detailing of participant comments. The use of "active listening" (rephrasing, summarizing) skills is not appropriate for the qualitative researcher as it may impose direction on the participant's responses (McCracken, 1988). The guide helped the researcher avoid this potential pitfall by keeping a list of appropriate, nondirective follow-up questions easily accessible. The interview guide allowed the researcher to concentrate on the participant's responses rather than try to formulate questions and structure while in the midst of the interview.

The list of questions consisted of four sections, each containing a number of specific inquiries. All questions were open-ended. The first section focused on the participant's present job, responsibilities, and role within the organization. The second section asked the participant to identify major change events in the organization over the past five years. The third section contained questions about the participants' reactions, thoughts, behaviors, and emotional responses to each of the identified events--before the event, at the time of the event, and after the event. The final section allowed the participants to reflect on the interview process and elaborate on any other thoughts they believed were significant or worth understanding for the purposes of the project.

The specific questions were developed by the researcher based on the goals of the research project and after a review of studies which used similar methodology (Isabella, 1986; Isabella, 1988; Isabella, 1990). Individual questions and the interview guide were modified and refined with input from the researcher's advisor, peers, committee, and the director of training and development of an organization not involved in this project. See appendix B for the interview guide.

Tape Recording

All interviews were tape recorded with the participants' full knowledge and permission. Tape recording offered a number of advantages. It freed the researcher from having to listen and write concurrently. It also ensured that the data would be collected accurately and in the words of the participant, thus avoiding any distortion induced by selective recording of the researcher's notes. Finally, it offered the researcher an honest look at his interviewing technique.

Tape recording also presented a number of potential drawbacks that had to be addressed. The cost of purchasing a high quality tape recorder was avoided by borrowing a unit from The National Center for Research in Vocational Education - University of Minnesota Site.

Provisions were made to protect the rights of the participants by ensuring that the tapes were available only to the researcher, appropriate advisors, and a transcriptionist. All of these people agreed to keep all information anonymous. Tapes were not made available to the participants nor to any member of the host organization. Tapes and transcriptions were coded for identification and the researcher alone had access to the identifying codes. All tapes were destroyed at the conclusion of the project.

The participants were fully aware that the interview was going to be tape recorded and how the tapes were to be used. If the participant was uncomfortable or unwilling to have the interview recorded, the tape recorder was not used. Participants were told that they were free to ask that the interview not be taped. They were also free to ask that the tape recorder be turned off at any point. They were shown how to operate the tape recorder, and the controls were within their reach at all times during the interview. They were encouraged to push the "stop" button at any time. All 29 participants allowed the recorder to be used, although two did exercise their option to discontinue taping for parts of the interviews. One tape was destroyed due to a technical error by the researcher. Much of the detail of this interview was lost, although the researcher did have notes that outlined the major points discussed by this person.

Interview Process

Each interview was scheduled for two hours. This allowed for some informal "warm-up" conversation, the formal interview process, a short break after about one hour, and a debriefing period at the conclusion of the interview. Interviews lasted from about 45 minutes to 3 hours. A minimum of 15 minutes was scheduled between interviews to allow the researcher to make notes and prepare for the next interview. In actuality, there usually were at least 30 minutes between interviews.

Participants were interviewed in the following order: (a) from executive and senior management levels, (b) from midmanagement positions, (c) from nonmanagerial positions, and (d) from production. This top-down structure served to develop support for the project and was thought to make it easier to gain access to the workforce. If the managers were aware of the nature of the project, they were more likely to offer support by allowing their subordinates to participate. This also helped reduce any anxiety as to the purpose of the research project and how the information would be used.

Most of the interviews were conducted in the organization's training rooms. These were relatively small but comfortable private rooms located within the organization's building. Interviews with the executives and senior managers were held in their offices. Interviews were scheduled at a time most convenient for the participant. As the manufacturing facility operated 24 hours per day, interviews were scheduled from early morning to late afternoon to allow employees from the night shift to participate.

The researcher would arrive early to prepare the room and tape-recording equipment. Participants were greeted at the door and made comfortable. They were told of the researcher's affiliation, purpose of the research, and how they were selected to participate. Next they were informed about the use of the tape recorder and their rights to request that the interview not be taped. Participants were given a copy of the "Ethics Protocol" (see Appendix C) which explained their rights in the project, the responsibilities of the researcher, and how the information would be used. Participants were asked to sign a copy of this informed consent form for the researcher's records and were given a copy to take with them. Information was provided to allow the participants to contact the researcher or his primary advisor if, in the future, they had any questions about the project.

The researcher asked permission to make notes as the interview proceeded and stated that the participants were free to look at the notes at any time during the interview. Finally, the participants were asked if they had any questions or concerns before the recorder was started.

At the end of each interview, the researcher discussed with the participants a summary of the tentative findings to date and asked for the participants' thoughts about the findings. Participants were thanked and asked if they had any questions before leaving the interview. Within one week of the interview, each participant was sent a handwritten thank-you note.

Data Analysis

Once the data were collected, they had to be analyzed. This section explains how the analysis was done.

Transcription

Audio tapes of the interviews were delivered to an experienced transcriptionist at the end of each week. The contents of each interview were entered verbatim into a computer file. The files were transferred to a floppy disk and returned, along with the audio tapes, to the researcher, usually within a few days. The lines were then numbered, and the files were printed with a wide right margin.

Coding of the Data

Coding qualitative data is a complex and time-consuming process. There are no agreed-upon tools or universal methods. This makes the process creative. It also means that it is very time consuming and, at times, difficult, confusing, and frustrating. Although it will be explained in a roughly linear form, in truth, the researcher found himself often moving between developing concepts and categories, noting tentative relationships, and building models.

Coding is the process in which the concepts and themes of interest are abstracted from the data. According to Strauss (1990), "Open coding is the part of analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data" (p. 62). In open coding the data are examined and broken into concepts. A concept is a label placed by the researcher on a particular incident or phenomenon. As this analysis proceeds, the concepts are compared for similarities and differences and are questioned as to what they reveal about the data. Through this method of constant comparison, the concepts are labeled, often in the form of notes on the transcripts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) or in a separate set of notes kept by the researcher (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The first five transcripts were read completely and used to critique and make adjustments to the interview process and questions. Next, they were re-read, and sections of the text were marked where they indicated phenomena of interest. The transcripts were read a third time, and this time conceptual labels were added in the margin for each marked section of text. After the second set of transcripts was received, they were likewise reviewed and marked. By this time, a large number of concepts were beginning to emerge. These concepts were next grouped into categories. A category is:

> a classification of concepts. This classification is discovered when concepts are compared one against another and appear to pertain to a similar phenomenon. Thus the concepts are grouped together under a higher order, more abstract concept called a category (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61).

To build the emerging categories, each transcript was reviewed, and the identified concepts were copied onto another document. This document was then reviewed. The concepts were compared as to the phenomena they represented, and grouped accordingly. Notations were made on this document, and each of the similarly grouped phenomena was given a common label. Any subcategories or relationships between concepts and between categories were also noted. These preliminary categories became a shorthand that allowed future incidents to be described and understood quickly.

As additional transcripts were reviewed, these categories were used to code the data. Salient sections of the interview transcripts were underlined and the appropriate label attached to the section of text. As new concepts emerged, additional categories were added. Throughout the coding process additional notes were kept about subcategories and relationships in the data. These notes were kept in a separate file. If a new category was created, previously coded transcripts were again reviewed to see if they contained additional information about the category.

Gradually, through the coding process, a pattern or model began to emerge. As this pattern became apparent, a number of tentative relationships were established and graphic models created to illustrate the major categories and relationships. These models were shared at the conclusion of the interviews with the final nine participants who then confirmed, clarified, or made suggestions for modifications in the model. These models were also reviewed with members of the researcher's final committee and peers.

By the time the twentieth transcript was coded, it was clear that the major categories had been established and theoretical saturation had been reached. Saturation is the point at which no additional data are being found upon which to develop new properties or concepts. The concept of saturation is well established in the interpretive literature (Glaser & Strauss, 1967;Patton, 1990; Pelto & Pelto, 1970; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Saturation is the point at which no further sampling is required, as Pelto and Pelto (1970) explain:

> The presence of highly patterned responses from a small number of persons can be taken as strong evidence that no further sampling is needed. The general rule might be: When addition of informants has little effect on the general structure of a complex pattern of data, then the present sample is satisfactory. (p. 139)

However, as the data were collected in a "top-down" manner, it was important to continue with a detailed coding process to ensure that the categories were valid for all levels within the organizational hierarchy and to define and refine further the relationships among concepts. The remaining transcripts were coded in the same manner as noted above, with no new codes needed. This process provided useful information about how significant change events were identified by people in different levels in the organizational hierarchy.

Next, a number of computer files were created, one for each of the categories. A definition of each category was written and entered into these files. Each transcript was again reviewed and the coding checked to ensure that it was congruent with the final list of categories. Direct quotations, which supported the categories, were copied from the interview transcript files into the files for the categories, along with reference markers. In this way a file was created for each of the categories, consisting of quotations taken directly from the interview transcripts. Once all the transcripts were reviewed and appropriate sections copied, the category files were printed for review. These files were then again checked for appropriate coding and reference. Adjustments were made as necessary. These files were edited for a consistent format and to remove any identifying names, places, or other identifying information.

Development of the Theory

Analysis and coding are methods used to break down the data into their components. The development of a theory or model, as described earlier in this chapter, involves the recombination of the derived components into a structure which is useful in understanding the phenomena observed through the interview process and for creating a coherent description or explanation of the process. This procedure has been variously described as "creative synthesis" (Patton, 1990), "inductive methodology" (Pelto & Pelto, 1970), and "selective coding" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Development of theory is the process of selecting the core category, relating it to the other categories, validating the relationships, and filling in the areas of the theory that need further refinement. It is the integration of the data into a theory. This is done by creating graphic models, re-reading the interviews and summary documents, asking others for their critique of the tentative findings, and comparing the model and theory with the data. This is not a linear process. As the data are reviewed, graphs are created, connections are made, and other relationships emerge to become part of the theory. Sometimes a tentative new relationship will be suggested, and the data must be reanalyzed to confirm or refute the relationship. Like coding, developing the theory is a creative act, prone to leaps of intuition.

Throughout the data collection and coding process, a file of speculations about relationships in the data, graphic models, and processes was kept. These notes provided the basis for developing the theory. Charts were created showing various relationships among categories, definitions were refined, and the transcripts were reexamined to find supporting data for the categories and relationships. This was an iterative process. As these refinements were made, they were discussed with peers, colleagues, and members of the researcher's committee. A "story line" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was developed to assist the researcher in communicating the theory to others and as a way of refining the theory itself. Just as a graphic may help in the development and understanding of the theory, a story line is a narrative form of the same information. (See Appendix D.)

Once the theory was well developed, it was reviewed and compared to the data from which it emerged for validation. It was not expected that all cases would fit the theory exactly. There are a number of reasons why this would happen. The theory was developed from themes that emerged across a number of cases, and each case fit the theme to a greater or lesser degree. Not every category or relationship was found in each case. It is through the examination of many cases that the themes became evident. An individual may have been in the midst of a change of context, that is, the person may have been re-evaluating the event in light of new information. Another reason for a poor fit would be due to additional intervening conditions which were not part of the theory. If this was true, then it became necessary to retrace the analytic process and decide if a new category should be developed. Care was taken to recognize that each interview was not a single case, but was comprised of a number of cases of the phenomena, and that each case had to be considered separately.

The Credibility of the Theory

The criteria used to justify the product of any type of inquiry must rest upon the assumptions intrinsic to the mode of inquiry. It is also important to keep in mind the purpose of the research. Patton (1990) states:

> It is important to understand that the interpretive explanation of qualitative analysis does not yield knowledge in the same sense as quantitative explanation. The emphasis is on illumination, understanding, and extrapolation rather than causal determination, prediction, and generalization. (p. 424)

Internal validity, a positivistic construct, is the degree of isomorphism between the findings of a study and what is found in the "real" world.

Interpretive approaches supplant the concept of validity with the concept of credibility. It refers to the match between the constructed realities of participants and those realities as represented by the researcher (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Credibility is best judged by asking the participants if the results of the study are congruent with their experience. Guba and Lincoln (1989) explain:

> Member checks (are) the process of testing hypotheses, data, preliminary categories, and interpretations with members of the stakeholding groups from whom the original constructions were collected. This is the single most crucial technique for establishing credibility. If the evaluator wants to establish that the multiple realities he or she presents are those that stakeholders have provided, the most certain test is verifying those multiple constructions with those who provided them. (p. 238)

By establishing credibility the researcher seeks to assure the reader that the findings and methods used to gather and analyze the data are based in the participant's experience and are not fabrications by the researcher. Again quoting Guba and Lincoln (1989):

> The constructivist paradigm's assurances of integrity of the findings are rooted in the data themselves. This means that data (constructions, assertions, facts, and so on) can be tracked to their sources, and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicit in the narrative of a case study. (p. 243)

Credibility is often checked informally while the data are being collected. The final verification is usually conducted in a formal presentation to the stakeholder group and just prior to the submission of the final report. It cannot be expected that the researcher's findings will fit exactly the experience of each of the participants, as the research findings are based on the experiences of a wide variety of people. The researcher has information not available to each individual participant.

The credibility of this research was checked with participants both while the data were being collected and prior to the submission of the final report. Recall that, at the end of each of the last nine interviews, the emergent model was explained to each participant. Participants were asked if the findings were an accurate representation of their experiences, and they were invited to critique and suggest modifications. Prior to the submission of this thesis to the Graduate School, it was presented to the stakeholders at the host organization. They, too, were asked if the model and theory were accurate representations of their experiences. In both cases, the participants confirmed the model and theory.

Transferability is the interpretive analog to the positivistic concept of external validity or generalizability and is another way to judge the credibility of interpretive research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). It is highly dependent on the degree of similarity between the research site and the site to which the findings are to be transferred. Through the careful delineation of the context, assumptions, methods, and findings, the interpretive researcher helps the receiver of the research decide on the transferability of the findings to another situation. The degree of transferability is entirely dependent on the similarity between the two situations. It is the responsibility of the researcher to provide as detailed as possible a description of the setting where the research was conducted and the data upon which the findings are based.

Due to the conditions of anonymity required by the host organization, it is difficult to provide a detailed accounting of the conditions under which this research was conducted. Therefore, it is difficult for anyone other than the researcher, the final committee, and the members of the host organization to make judgments about the transferability of the findings.

Dependability is analogous to the concept of reliability in positivistic research. Dependability is judged on the ability of independent reviewers to trace the logic and decisions made about the methods used in the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Triangulation through multiple analysts was not possible, as the researcher was working alone in the data collection process. Measures of inter-rater reliability were not appropriate because any such rating would have to be done without contextual information and without an understanding of the data across all cases. The purpose of this research was to develop a model, not to verify a model. A measure of inter-rater agreement would only report the level to which two people associated the same label with a section of text based on the decision rules developed by the researcher. It would reveal neither information about how the concepts emerged nor the relationships among concepts. Additionally, there were a number of pragmatic problems that ruled out the use of a second rater, not the least of which concerned the agreement signed with the host organization limiting access to the data. Fortunately, there were two other methods of triangulation that were appropriate.

The first was the triangulation of data sources. The participants in this study represented many functions and levels within the organization. As will become more evident in the next chapter, which deals with analysis, their identification and responses to change events were remarkably consistent.

The second type of dependability check was through theory triangulation. When the findings of this study were compared with the findings of other similar studies that used other methodologies, the findings were very consistent. This will be described in Chapter 4 which compares the findings of this research to other theories and research projects.

A number of methods were used to enhance the credibility of this research. Guba and Lincoln (1989) state that peer debriefing--the discussion and analysis of the research findings with disinterested peers, allows the researcher the opportunity to gain additional insights into the data, a testing ground for preliminary formulations, and a means of catharsis to relieve some of the psychological stress associated with research. Throughout the research process, findings, hints, models, and frustrations were shared with peers, colleagues, and committee members. Indeed, these conversations were vital in helping to identify and clarify issues.

Although the interactions with each participant lasted only two hours, it is believed that the researcher was able, in most cases, to establish trust, build rapport, and overcome any systematic distortions in data in the process of uncovering themes and constructs. This helped the researcher avoid what Kirk and Miller (1986) refer to as "quixotic" reliability, the repetition of the official "party line." This was evidenced by the participants' seemingly comfortable manner, use of colloquial language, willingness to relate information critical of the organization, and overall tone during the interviews. Participants appeared to be very interested in the project and were very willing to participate. Many mentioned that they enjoyed the experience and thanked the researcher for the opportunity to participate. Such rapport and trust were enhanced by the researcher's lack of any formal authority or power in relation to the participants, and by the safeguards built into the methodology in relation to who would have access to the data and the assurances of anonymity.

Finally, the credibility of the researcher contributes to the credibility of the findings. Patton (1990) states:

> Because the researcher is the instrument in qualitative inquiry, a qualitative report must include information about the researcher. What experience, training, and perspective does the researcher bring to the field? What personal connections does the researcher have to the people, program, or topic studied? (p. 472)

The purpose is to report personal information that may have influenced the data collection and analysis. Although the researcher may believe that such factors did not influence the research process, it is best to report such information and allow the reader to decide. Minimally, this gives the reader an understanding of the background and potential bias of the researcher. Appendix E contains a short biography and disclosure statement by the researcher, which will help the reader judge the researcher's credibility.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the methodology used in the conduct of this research. The grounded theory approach and the interpretive assumptions upon which it is based were defined. The procedures used in this research, including the site selection, selection of participants, methods of data collection, and procedures used to analyze the data were reported. The process used to develop the theory was explained, and guidelines were presented on how to evaluate the credibility of the findings. Finally, the procedures used to enhance the credibility of the findings throughout the research process were explained.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this chapter the categories and the relationships among these categories that evolved from the analysis of the interview data are explained. Through this process, a model of organizational change was developed. Each component of the model is introduced, defined, and supported by quotations taken from the interview transcripts. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, some of the quotations have been slightly modified without changing the meaning of the quotations. These modifications are noted in [BRACKETED CAPS]. The researcher's comments during the interviews are [bracketed only].

Introduction to the Model

Change, by definition, is a dynamic process and is very difficult to represent accurately using a static model. Although the model is presented in a linear and logical manner, this is done only for clarity. In actuality, the categories and relationships explained herein do not come into play in a well-ordered, linear, logical way. They are constantly in flux, altered by the passage of time, the introduction of new information and new events, and the change process itself as events unfold. No one identified change event exists in isolation. Each is both overture and coda to other events and occurs in concert with still more events.

The purpose of this research was to build a theory and model that would help in understanding the organizational change process. The goal was not to develop a theory for prediction or control. And though the change process has been broken into components and each component analyzed individually, it is through their interaction that the true richness of the organizational change process can be seen. Change is a flowing process, not a series of discrete steps.

It is also important to remember that the organizational change process occurs within a complex social system. People interact to share information, impressions, ideas, gossip, news, and opinions about the world around them. Through this process, referred to as social mediation, members of a social system share their individual interpretations to create a common informational environment (the dominant reality) through which individuals can understand and make sense out of their unique experiences. Individual interpretations exist within, modify, and are modified by this process.

The model developed through this research consists of concepts and relationships that may be represented as a cycle, as illustrated in Figure 1. Each of the components will be discussed and illustrated. Relationships between the components will also be explored. The model consists of three intervals of time: (a) the anticipatory interval, the period before the event happens; (b) the event interval, the time it takes the event to occur; and (c) the postevent interval, when people reflect on the event.

During the anticipatory interval, people identify and analyze a potential event and take actions to prepare for the event. During the postevent interval people assess the change and the change process. Each of these intervals and associated actions will be explained in detail.

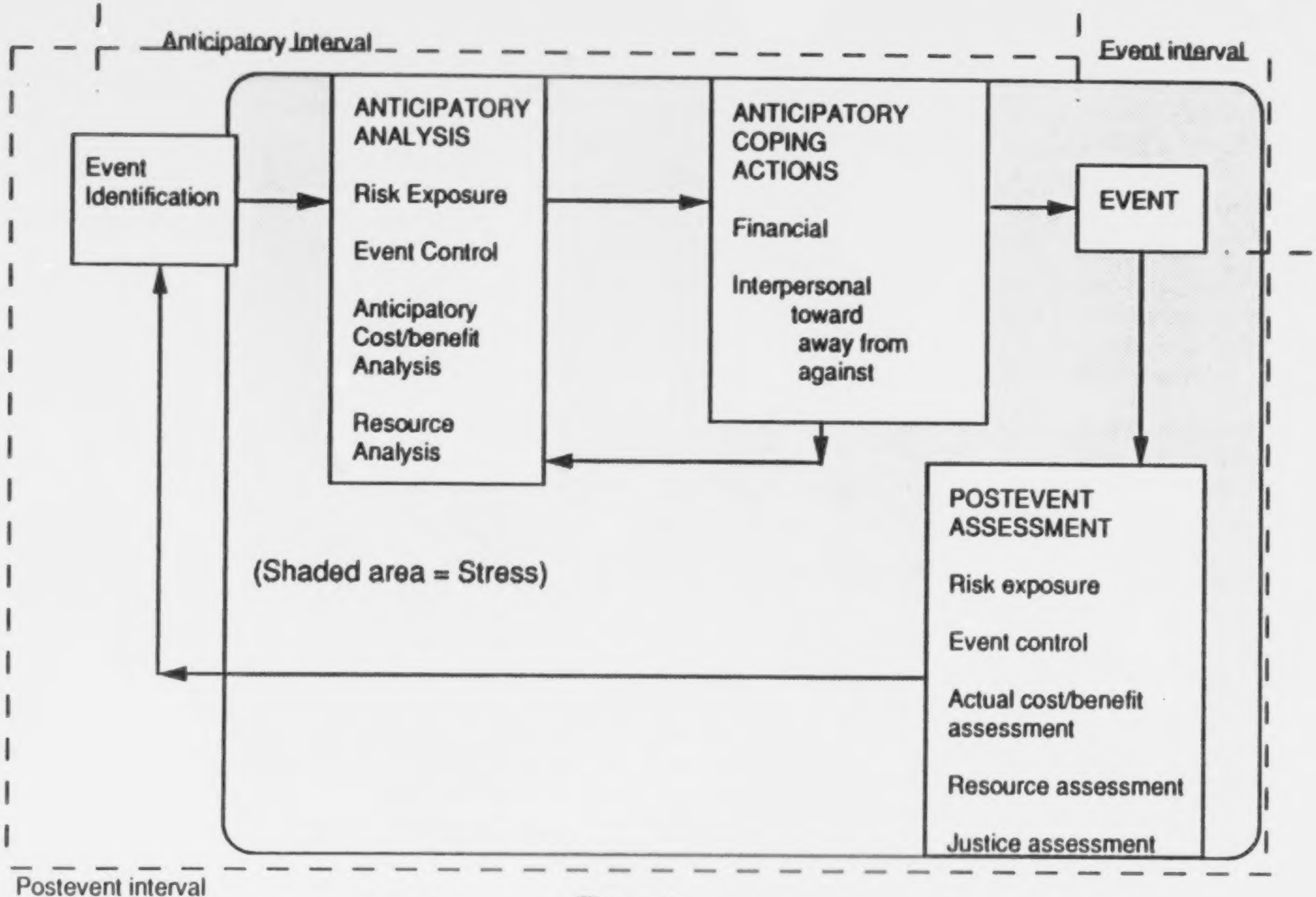
Anticipatory Interval
Event interval
Event Identification
ANTICIPATORY ANALYSIS
Risk Exposure
Event Control
Anticipatory Cost/benefit Analysis
Resource Analysis
ANTICIPATORY COPING ACTIONS
Financial
Interpersonal
toward
away from
against
EVENT
POSTEVENT ASSESSMENT
Risk exposure
Event control
Actual cost/benefit assessment
Resource assessment
Justice assessment
(Shaded area = Stress)
Postevent interval

Figure 1
Individual Perceptions of Change Model for Survivors of Change

Anticipatory Interval

During the anticipatory interval, people identified potentially significant events, analyzed their potential impact, and took action to influence the course of the events. The results of these processes determined the level of stress experienced.

Event Identification

People were constantly scanning their environment, noting events that might be of significance to them. This occurred through the normal process of day-to-day life and, often, without much conscious effort. A number of information sources were used, such as the media, formal and informal modes of communication, rumors, and conversations with others. This scanning played an important role as it allowed people time to prepare for future events and evaluate their potential impact. One person, in discussing an anticipated change, stated:

> Quite a number of them said, "Yeah, I expected it." There were a few who, for some reason, y'know that small percentage, that never do know what's going on, that were just devastated by it, and you just really felt bad about it.

People gained information about their organization and events through the media. Television, radio, and print all were used. For example:

> We grabbed any article and every publication that referenced [THE NEW COMPANY] to gain any background on that company.

Or:

> Certainly some level of concern, because what you hear in the industry, typically reported through trade magazines and the press, things like

> that, word of mouth and rumor. [THE NEW COMPANY] did not have a very good reputation and certainly their CEO and now our CEO or Chief Operating Officer, the president, didn't have a very good reputation.

The information did not have to be directly related to a specific future event nor to the individual for people to understand its significance. People would interpret the information and relate it to their specific circumstance.

> They were told before it even happened what was going to happen, I mean the automotive industry told them what was going to happen. We knew what was going to happen, but we were dumb enough not to do anything about it. It kind of shows the mentality, I think, of the American individual, that it can't hurt me.

A change in stock policy became the basis for predicting a change in ownership:

> Well, we suspected only when [THE OLD COMPANY] called in the stock and then they split off the company into being [AN INDEPENDENT COMPANY]. And when you call in the stock and you start to call a company something else, and you start to realign yourself organizationally, you have to think and also understand that [THE OLD COMPANY] was in a cash flow problem, and they really needed to bail out. Unfortunately, they had to spin off one of their more profitable sectors. And that was us.

Newsletters, memos, and communication meetings were also sources of information about the organization, although, oftentimes, they were reported to have happened either after-the-fact or after the informal systems had spread the news. One member of the organization began to suspect layoffs when an internal communique announced a merger:

> I think I became suspicious of it when the announcement was made that [THE NEW COMPANY], this was prior to the actual acquisition, was going to, in essence, buy out the [DIVISION] from [THE OLD COMPANY].

Rumors were a prime source of information. Not only were they prevalent but they spread information very quickly.

> Well, if I recall right, it probably takes about 30 seconds for a rumor to get from one end of the facility to the other end. I mean, you don't read it in the paper, and there's no announcement over the intercom.

Historical information was a source of rumors:

> So, there was a lot of scuttlebutt on the street, in terms of the fact that [THE NEW COMPANY] had gone through a fairly massive engineering layoff just a year previous when they got into financial trouble. So that whenever [THE NEW COMPANY] would begin to see that the quarterly earnings were going to be impacted, they would make instantaneous employee decisions to be able to balance out the earnings for that particular quarter.

Environmental scanning and social mediation, the process of sharing information to reach an agreement about its meaning, were linked. One participant explained how social mediation helped in the identification of events:

> You certainly don't have any other kind of a network. I think every organization has that type of a network though, and that's pretty much, I guess, how you hear it. You hear bits and pieces and you just start putting things together. Pretty soon you've got the story.

Another participant, while expressing doubts about the accuracy of rumors, nonetheless paid attention to them:

> Oh yeah, we would talk all the time, but it was just the same type of concerns. You would talk with your buddies, "Oh great, do you think they're going to go?" Actually, I never truly believed that it would happen, but there's always that little doubt in the back of your mind.

New employees were perceived to be at a disadvantage as they did not have a well-established network of contacts within the organization:

> You know, I think, not having been in the company before, you don't know what's really going to happen. Now, yes, I think I have more roots of communication than I would have had as a new employee.

A number of participants indicated that rumors seemed to focus on only the negative aspects of any potential event:

> Well, they spent a lot of time talking to others, and, y'know, keeping an ear to the wall to hear what's coming. They exchanged rumors, "Did you hear this, did you know that, have you seen this latest article?" A lot of articles were passed around about [THE NEW COMPANY] and about the acquisition. The more controversial the article, the more circulation it got. People were, kind of, looking for the worst. In a way, they were sort of very apprehensive and nervous. I would say, maybe, they were open to believing the worst, rather than being rational about it.

Another person put it this way:

> There were a lot of little pockets of employees saying, "Well, this is what I heard" and sharing rumors. It only takes a couple people that are interested in getting a little anxiety going and see how much stress they can put on their fellow employees. It seems that everybody kind of clings to that person because, y'know, we're looking for that.

Friends and family were also part of the process of social mediation:

> Well, I talked to my wife, and she was favorable to the change. She felt, from what I had told her about the job and the environment, it was a good match. I talked to not only my boss, but his boss. I talked to both [Mr. X] and [Mr. Y], and both gave me encouragement about making the change, so that was favorable. I don't think I talked to anybody else in this organization. I think I talked to some friends, outside, that we've known for a period of time and got positive feedback from them.

Identified Events

The main goal of this research was to develop a model of the organizational change process. A collateral question sought to determine if there would be differences in the identified events depending on the participant's level in the organizational hierarchy. There was considerable homogeneity in the events the participants identified as significant. Almost all of the participants recognized the recent acquisition of the organization as significant. Most of the other identified changes were results of the acquisition, such as a new management philosophy, a change in the mission of the organization, or an increase in the level of production.

The executives and managers all noted that the acquisition was a significant event. It meant that there was a change in the organizational mission and philosophy:

> We were sold to [THE NEW COMPANY] and, of course, that is the big event as far as the people in this organization are concerned. We went from a very progressive, human resource oriented organization, to one that was, and if you ask the people here in [THE NEW COMPANY], too, they will tell you they're light years behind us in just about every aspect of the business except in large volume manufacturing.

In talking about the new president of the organization, a result of the acquisition, one senior manager noted that a significant change was:

> That change that he made in management direction towards profitability and quality.

Another senior manager concurred by identifying:

> the growth of the company, the change in philosophy as far as going from one owner to another.

Although nonmanagement participants identified the acquisition as a significant event for the organization, they did not perceive that it had much effect on them or their work. One stated:

> We've got our job to do no matter who's on top, y'know.

Another participant put it this way:

> We have the same management, the same engineering support groups, all that is the same, that never changed. Maybe the upper management did, some of the upper management did and some people got different names and were put on the board of directors. Those changes didn't hit us as production people. We've seen a benefit change. They changed our sick times and that stuff around. What they haven't changed is our pay scale; it definitely needs to be looked at. When [THE NEW COMPANY] took over the only thing that was changed was the name, and who signed my check. Otherwise, I didn't really see a lot of changes.

People who were higher in the organizational hierarchy tended to note changes such as the acquisition, a change in organizational mission, or a change in management philosophy. Participants lower in the hierarchy, though acknowledging those events as significant, focused more on the results of the acquisition and its direct impact on them. They tended to note things such as a change in working hours, a change in benefits, or layoffs:

> I don't think we really felt a big change down at this level other than the benefits and some of the rules. Our management is still the same, and our directive is to make parts, to make good parts, and we're still doing that.
>
> Well, I guess the thing that really hits me the most is, here we have [THE OLD COMAPNY] and we have [THE NEW COMPANY]. With [THE OLD COMPANY] we went from having separate vacation and sick time to merged sick and vacation time. I like that because there are times when I feel like taking time off but I don't want to call in sick. It really bothers me to lie when I'm not sick, but a mental health day is important to me. So I like that part of it.

Many of the participants mentioned that the organization had gone through a number of periods of layoffs or "downsizing." This was noted mostly by the managers who had to tell people that their jobs were gone. The managers spoke about these layoffs and the associated stress much more frequently than did nonmanagement participants. That managers were more affected by the layoffs than were the professional or production workers may be an artifact of the research design. It must be remembered that all of the participants in this research were still employed by the organization; they had survived the layoffs. The managers who had to let people go were still part of the organization. People who had lost their jobs were not available to participate in this study.

No matter what the identified event, participants went on to explain that the reason the event was perceived as significant was due to its direct effect on them. And, although the events may have differed, how people responded to these changes was very consistent.

Anticipatory Analysis

Once a potentially significant event was identified, people conducted an anticipatory analysis. They attempted to determine the probability that they would be affected by the change (risk exposure), how much control they had over the event (event control), what they had to gain or lose (anticipatory cost/benefit analysis), and what resources they had to help them deal with the event (resource analysis). Not everyone evaluated all these factors nor was the analysis conducted in any set sequence.

Risk Exposure

Once people had identified a potentially significant event, they tried to determine if the event would affect them. They made these judgments based on a number of considerations, and not every person used the same factors in making the judgment.

The relationship between the person's role in the organization and the person's perception of the needs of the organization was one consideration. The person asked, "Of what value am I to the organization?" In assessing his risk exposure prior to the acquisition of the company, one lower level manager said:

> I think some of the thoughts were, "OK, we're kind of safe, right, because they're not going to come in and destroy their front line operations. They'll get rid of some honchos up there, on top; they'll get rid of some VPs or do whatever." In some cases, they did.

An engineer expressed similar reasoning:

> We started hearing that they are going to be cutting back, but knowing our position here, that this is a major manufacturing plant, they weren't going to cut back engineers. They were cutting back the duplication of services, purchasing, accounting, and all this kind of stuff. They couldn't afford to cut us; we're their bread and butter right now.

One participant had a unique role; no one else in the organization had his job title or was trained in his area of specialization. He explained:

> Anticipating, well, what's my option or opportunity or potential for layoff? It was a concern of mine, but at the same time I had the security of knowing that I had a pretty important work activity. The company seemed to have a sense of its importance. With time, it's become more important; it's a regulatory compliance issue.

Another person believed that her job was necessary no matter what happened:

> I felt that I had various experiences. I felt that I was a viable part of the organization. I felt the role that I provided was a necessary part of the organization, whether it's growing or whether it's dying. You're going to need somebody who is there to, in a sense, assist in the grief or the glory of the company. And so, I think I was more secure in my role.

Some participants considered the value of their work group in relation to the organization when they evaluated their personal risk. One person, whose work group prepared raw materials to go into the manufacturing line, expressed confidence that a layoff would not affect her because of her work group:

> Well, it was a little different situation for us because we were at the very beginning of [THE PRODUCTION LINE] and we were busy. You didn't see a lot of people leaving from our group. You heard about people up in the office on second floor that left, but who knew what they were doing?

One manager feared that the new owners did not value his work group and, therefore, felt more at risk for layoff:

> I think we knew or we felt that [THE NEW OWNERS] did not hold [THE OLD COMPANY] management or human resources individuals in high regard, and so I think, at the beginning, we thought, before we even got out of the chute and proved ourselves, we've already had a tag assigned to us that says "failure," or whatever, and so why put the efforts out there?

The conditions under which one participant was hired helped him assess his risk:

> [Did you feel threatened by the knowledge that there was a potential for layoffs in the future?] No, no, not particularly because I came into this environment knowing that it was coming. Somebody had made a hiring decision, and I didn't think they did it with the idea that they were going to bring me in and let me go right away. I think I was brought in with some knowledge of my background and with the idea that I fit into the plans that they had.

Tenure or seniority played a role when determining risk. In reviewing how people responded to news of a potential layoff, one participant said that the less senior employees felt:

> Tremendous fear, because I had been part of that organization for a long period of time, '76 until '86, 10 years. They look at it and say, "Wow, if somebody who's been here for 10 years is no longer needed, I've only been here for 2 or 3 years, what's my vulnerability?"

Age was noted as a factor in determining the probability of being laid off. In assessing his potential to be terminated, a senior manager believed that his age might work against him:

> It won't go on forever, because at the time I was 51 and getting old and feeble, and they probably won't keep me on too many years anyway.

One person expressed concern that a change in sick leave policy might increase her risk of layoff, given her age and health:

> Because, as a worker gets older, they feel a little insecure about their job anyway, and as you get older you may have heart attacks or breaking a leg or something like that, and you may not be able to come back in six months.

Education and gender were also used in assessing risk:

> Being an educated female it really added to my credibility. Being educated, period, in planning and scheduling, was a rarity.

One person thought that his high salary increased his risk of being laid off:

> I know for a fact that they look at everybody that's making so many dollars and at one time we were all put on another list. I was on that list again, because of the money I make. It wasn't my qualifications, didn't know my name, didn't know who I was, never met me, but I was on a list because I made this amount of money.

Management had a special role in determining how events were analyzed. Managers had a large role in the process of social mediation. By virtue of their access to information and formal authority, they were sought out in times of uncertainty and were expected to help others understand and make sense out of the information flowing through the organization:

> I reported to [Mr. B] who headed up [THE OLD DIVISION] at that time. We would sit down, kind of discuss it in noon meetings or just having lunch together. And, basically, shared our concerns and fears and probably, just by sharing it, we felt a little more confident that positive things were going to happen.

Because managers were able to play a major role in influencing how events were understood, their response to change could work against the organization. One participant described a situation in which it was necessary to remind some mid-level managers of their power in this regard:

> We had to, kind of, corner a couple of the managers because they were allowing their concerns to be visible to their people, and then agitating the people a little more. So we had to, in a sense, corner them and say "Hey, right now you are the ones that are pulling this group together."

Later, the same participant detailed how one manager's influence could affect a great number of people:

> When that manager finally left yesterday, he had 25 or 30 people reporting to him. He was impacting how they were reviewing this change. And, if he's feeling that strongly about it, then how is he impacting or reinforcing the change for the employees reporting to him? And there's a lot of, "No, I won't say a lot," but there's enough managers here that are still faced with not accepting the change. And, because of the role they have, they reinforce 20 times their number of employees in this organization.

How managers behaved during a major change event also played a large role in determining how other members of the organization evaluated the event. Members of the organization looked to see how the managers were responding to events. The mangers took on a symbolic role and greatly affected how others interpreted events.

The very fact that managers chose to stay with the organization was comforting:

> For instance, had [Mr. B.] announced right away that "They're going to buy us and I'm leaving," or, "I'm not going to be part of that," or however he would have said it, it would have been "Oh-oh, you better get your resume ready and go jump ship because it's a bailout." And it didn't turn out that way. There were those kinds of concerns, but I think they did the right things to minimize those significantly, and I think that's very important in a situation like this. People need to have familiar faces to identify with.

Some members of the organization believed that they could not express their concerns or talk to others about them because of their role as an official conduit of information. One participant put it this way:

> I guess I assumed that because the role was, in the organization, in supporting and in helping managers make this transition, that by my allowing [MY OWN CONCERNS TO SHOW] I would only reinforce their fears that much more.

Event Control

Once a potential event had been identified, people assessed their ability to alter the course of the event. Many people reported that their lack of control over events actually reduced their anxiety. The attitude was well expressed by one manager who said:

> It doesn't pay to sit around and just worry about it because, if it's going to happen, it's going to happen anyway.

Another manager expressed similar logic:

> I mean, the acquisition, of course, was on everybody's mind, but there wasn't anything I could do about it. So that was just in the back of my mind, and what would happen after they took us over, would happen. It was very important, but on the other hand, nothing I could do was going to change or do anything about it, so I just left that alone.

A production level employee put it this way:

> I think that, overall, you tried to keep a good outlook on it because there isn't a whole lot you can do about it. If you're going to go, you're going to go and there isn't anything you can do. That's the way I felt.

In other situations, having event control reduced stress and anxiety. One participant was given total responsibility for a technological change. He was pleased that he would be able to control how the change would happen:

> I felt very pleased. I felt good that he thought enough to bring me into it. I just went along with it, and it seemed like it was great fun to me. We got to go out and talk to the vendor and check things out, and then, next thing I knew, he was talking to me and telling me, "Well," he says, "don't get excited now, but I'm going to take you out of line management and make you a project manager. You won't have any employees working for you because I want you to put this system in."

Another participant stated:

> It's not so bad when I've been an active part of the decision to say we really have completed this particular function, and it's no longer needed.

Not having control of events sometimes resulted in discomfort or frustration. When the organization was acquired by another company, most of the employees had very little to say about it. One employee connected his lack of control over his employment to his feelings about it:

> When you can make the choice of whether or not you're working for a company, that's one thing, but when you don't have the choice, I just think you want to be out. I really think bitterness sets in right away.

Another participant expressed the same concerns:

> They were very frustrated because there was a change coming that they had no participation in. Normally when you move from one company to another company, it's at your initiation. This move was a move that was forced upon them, to move from one company to another, and I think what you saw was a rebellion, an anger. "You can't do this, you shouldn't be doing this to me, I didn't ask for this change." And so I think that they were a little upset that some people got together and made a decision on their lives.

People were more accepting of a change if they had something to say about the change itself. One manager described how he would intentionally get his workgroup involved early in the planning process:

> Well, I guess if people can be part of the planning in change, it helps a lot. But if they're part of the plan, part of the people to decide, "Hey, we need to work more efficiently or do some things," and try to have them involved in the ideas. Sometimes, you might want to try to guide them to that idea; it works a lot better, rather than just doing it. It'd be a lot better to talk to them the week before and say, "What do you think of this," or, "We need to do that, do you have any ideas?" It's a lot easier.

When a potentially significant change was identified, people made a judgment on how much control they had over the event. The results of this judgment had an effect on their emotional reactions and how accepting they were of the change.

Anticipatory Cost-Benefit Analysis

Once a potentially significant change was identified, people evaluated it in terms of what they had to gain and what they had to lose as a result of the change. All participants reported asking themselves these types of questions.

Although people could see both costs and benefits in any change, they tended to fear the worst. As one production worker put it:

> I guess I'm just like everybody else where I tend to resist change unless it's proven to me that it's positive.

Participants also considered how the change might affect their friends and families. One participant, in contemplating a promotion, explained the process:

> You really have to weigh out, "What does it require and am I willing to pay it? Am I willing to travel around the world every month? Am I willing to live on a plane? Am I willing not to see my friends and family? Is it really worth the money? Is it worth the health ramifications?" Those are all things you have to understand. What kind of job is it? Right now, I really like dealing with the operational issues; I like getting my hands dirty still. I like working policy, working strategy, and I think I'm probably moving that way. It may fit my life later. But right now, I like the idea of, maybe, running an operation perhaps [OVERSEAS] and then understanding what's required. I'm still very young, so we'll see.

Another participant expressed a similar process in deciding if he should move to another state:

> Career-wise there wasn't any question of the opportunities. But you balance that against what is the need for the family and things like that. I had a daughter that was in junior high, and I had a son that was in first grade. I think he was in first grade at that time, so those are all considerations. When I'd been in education, in the past, [THE STATE] had a good reputation for their school systems and things like this, so I saw that as opportunities, too. And my wife is in this type of business, too, and I think there'd probably be more opportunities there than [ANOTHER STATE].

Another person, anticipating the acquisition, worried about his job security and the potential impact on his family:

> You don't know where you're going to be. Are they going to move me over to [THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN], and I'll be 50 miles away from home, and then do I have to uproot my family and move? I don't want to move and those types of situations. And the business had gone downhill; is it going to go downhill more? And if it does, will that affect me? I've never been overly worried about getting laid off, but you certainly think about that, that you're going to lose your job. What am I

> going to do now? I'm not financially strapped, but still, I've got two kids and a family and a house and that type of thing. At that time the kids were in high school, now they're getting ready for college. Those are things you think of, even if you're probably the best employee in the world, you probably still think about that.

Financial considerations were paramount in most people's cost/benefit analysis. They considered not only salary but also benefits and what effect a change in either might have on them and their families:

> OK, so [THE NEW OWNERS]'s out in [ANOTHER STATE] and they do this and this and this but what's that mean for me? Is my pay going to change, is my health benefits going to cost more? I'm in the middle of adopting a child. Am I going to lose my adoption benefit that [THE OLD COMPANY] had; I mean these were the kinds of things that people wanted to know. How's this going to affect me?
>
> The first uncertainty was, well, you know, well obviously I'm not going to retire with [THE OLD COMPANY] so what happens to my retirement? So there's a little bit of that financial aspect that goes with it. The second viewpoint was, what happens to my organization which is selling to [THE NEW OWNERS] competitors; will [THE NEW OWNERS] take a position to say, "No, you can't sell to those competitors any longer"? Therefore, not only was my long-term financial security at stake with retirement, but my short-term financial security in terms of not having a job was potentially in jeopardy as well.

Participants also examined what the change would mean to them in terms of their self-worth. One participant, facing potential layoff, realized that the layoff decisions were not based on individual performance, but this was of little comfort:

> I think that, had I lost my job, for no matter what reason, it would have put my ego way down the tubes. I would have just took some of the responsibility for it no matter what the reasoning behind it was.

Another employee, facing the same situation, voiced the same concern:

> I wanted to survive, y'know and not feel that, ultimately, I was found not to be sufficient for whatever reason.

One manager said simply:

> Well, it would have been a significant blow, I would say, that's real ego impacter.

Changing from the design department to the manufacturing department caused one participant to fear a loss of social status:

> Unfortunately, industry in the United States does not culturally prepare technical people for a manufacturing environment. They tend to isolate them and I'd say that the educational organizations tend to depreciate manufacturing. Companies do also. Contrary to what the Japanese do, where manufacturing is very highly viewed, in this country manufacturing is still Siberia, and therefore, engineers who are dragged into Siberia are somewhat fearful.

Participants also recognized that potential changes could bring gains. One manager looked forward to the opportunities that the acquisition might offer:

> I guess maybe I'm a little egotistical regarding my skills, but I felt that I'm a survivor. I was willing to see what they had to offer. I was excited because [THE NEW OWNERS] opened a whole new world, and it opened the opportunity of working in, truly, a worldwide marketplace that was a major player in the industry. So it opened up what I considered to be more opportunities.

Resource Analysis

Anticipatory cost/benefit analysis is the process whereby people attempt to predict what they may gain and what they may lose because of the change. Resource analysis is the process of evaluating what resources are available to help deal with the change. These resources were financial, familial, socio-political, and skill-related.

Financial resources included savings, property, stocks, and severance pay. One participant spoke about how his understanding of a severance package available to him helped him make the decision to stay with the organization:

> Well, are you just going to say "The heck with it" and walk away from $15,000 ? I guess is what it amounts to, in a lump sum. So I think a lot of people just said "I'll ride it out and let the chips fall where they may and when it happens fine I've got this to fall back on until I can find something else."

Another person told how he always tried to be prepared for a job loss by having some extra savings:

> But, maybe, outside of work I may say "Well, O.K., I better make sure I put a little more money in the bank and not buy any new cars or houses or major investments." I always looked at it that way, but basically I've always tried not to financially have a problem in case it happens. I look at that probably even more today than I did years ago. I don't always go with "wants," I go with "need." So, yeah, I looked at things a little differently. I may have spent my money a little more freely when I felt more secure.

Spouses were considered financial resources in that their jobs could help support the family in times of change:

> I had a wife that's working and could go back full time as a registered nurse which brings in a significant income, at least enough to meet the immediate bills,

When both members of a couple worked in the same organization, the anticipatory resource analysis became more complex. Thinking back on a time when her job was threatened, one woman remarked:

> Well, I wouldn't have been completely devastated. My husband works here, too. If he would have lost his job, I'm sure it would have had greater impact on us. So we were going through me struggling where I was going to end up and him not knowing if he was going to have a job tomorrow. That was difficult, but if I would have lost mine we would have survived. I mean, everybody survives, but it wouldn't have been as great an impact as if he would have lost his, or we both would have lost them at the same time. That would have been bad.

Another participant saw his family as a potential financial resource:

> My wife's family is very supportive, they're fairly well off so I kind of felt like even if there was a big bind that way they would help us out,

Friends were identified as potentially important financial resources:

> A lot of our friends would be affiliated through the church we go to. If anything, there'd probably be some support there, if needed, maybe even financial support or temporary help of some sort. If we had to move, there were plenty of people I could call that would help me move. I know that.

Families provided psychological as well as financial support:

> I have a very supportive family. They knew the concerns I had. They were very supportive, and I always knew, I always felt that if anything happened, something else would be there,

Tenure and the sociopolitical ties established through working in an organization for a long period of time were identified as resources. They were very closely linked to the individual's assessment of marketable skills. Personal confidence was closely linked to available resources:

> I never feared for my job. I've toyed many times about, "Well if I don't work here what do I do"? I have plenty of other options. I own a small business, I teach, I have an incredible fascination with travelling, and I've done a lot with it, so I guess I was pretty prepared mentally not to work. Of course that's different when you're not working.

Another participant expressed self-confidence based on his reputation in the organization and his abilities:

> My fears were probably not as pronounced as their fears. Maybe the reason for it is that I had established myself as an individual within the organization, that I had numerous skills, and so, if my skills were not needed in marketing, then I knew I could use my skills on the business management side. If not on the business management side, in contract

> management or something else. I knew that I had enough flexibility in my capabilities that I could find a fit within the organization. I had some confidence in being able to do that, and if not within [THE NEW OWNERS] with some other company in the [AREA].

Another participant saw his tenure and contributions to the organization as a resource:

> But I would have thought that since I had been in that organization for five years, that my contribution to the organization was strong enough that they would find another position within [THE COMPANY] at that time that could use my talents.

Length of the Anticipatory Interval

The length of the anticipatory interval determined how much time people had to identify, analyze, and prepare for an event. For some of the participants, a long anticipatory interval resulted in higher levels of stress:

> Well, shorter would have been better. [Why would it have been better?] We wouldn't have had to worry so long, I suppose. So much talking and speculation, but it wasn't that worrisome. I think maybe some people who live from paycheck to paycheck would have worried more than those that were a little more affluent. But people like to talk, some people like to talk more than others, and they love making little confrontations. I think it would have gone on anyway, whether it was longer or shorter. We still would have gone through that period of not knowing and guessing.
>
> I just felt that belaboring the point wouldn't do us any good, we wouldn't make any better decisions. I found that the longer you think about a decision, the more times you're going to change your mind. It's almost like taking a test. The first answer is almost always the right one, changing your mind doesn't always do the right thing.
>
> I've been in companies where they said we're going to need to lay off 10% next month. So everybody sits around biting their nails for a month, waiting to see who's going to get the axe. And then, I've seen it where they haven't said anything and they just hit it at random. You get gun shy no matter what they do.

Too short an anticipatory interval increased the stress for some people because they didn't have time to prepare for the event:

> I don't know why there had to be so little warning. I get the feeling that maybe management is concerned about some sort of retribution, destroying files or something like that. Geeze, I can't see that happening.
>
> Well, I suppose a little bit more time for preparation would have made me more comfortable. I don't know that it would have helped a whole lot, things went pretty well. It was a little hectic, maybe a little bit more time to plan.
>
> [I guess I was wondering if there were things you did to prepare yourself?] No, not prior to the announcement itself, because prior to the announcement the only individuals we knew were [THE TOP EXECUTIVES]. And even MR. B., who was heading up [THE DIVISION] at the time, was not aware of what [THE OLD COMPANY'S PRESIDENT] was doing in selling [THE DIVISION], and so even at the very highest executive level within [THE DIVISION] this was a definitely a shock.
>
> I felt I would have enough transition time where I could seek other employment and make that transition. So that wasn't as much of a concern. I wasn't, all of a sudden, going to lose all financial stability.

The end of the anticipatory interval was generally greeted with a sense of relief that the waiting was over:

> [WHEN THE EVENT HAPPENED THE RESPONSE WAS] "Thank goodness, it's done." I mean, it dragged over so long. You can only dwell on certain things for so long and then you're on to something new.
>
> There was peace of mind knowing that it has happened, I can relax and I don't have to worry about constantly pleasing everybody in the company or working incredibly long hours.
>
> Once we finally got it going it was almost a relief because you knew it had to be done.

Stress

Depending on the outcome of the anticipatory analysis, people experienced stress to a greater or lesser degree. A potential job loss was perhaps the biggest stressor and was the most frequently mentioned change event.

It would be hard to overstate the amount of stress people felt when facing a job loss. The metaphors people reported are powerful and conjure strong images:

> I think people that were very, very dedicated, lost their jobs. I mean it had nothing to do with performance, and so I think we've all bled because of that, y'know, we've all had wounds because of that, even though some of us survived, that was hard, because you never knew when you were going to be next, and I think those years left some real scars on all of us. (Emphasis added)

Later, when discussing a policy that required terminated employees to be out of the plant fairly quickly, the same person said that perhaps the policy was good in that it reduced the stress on those who remained behind, likening the loss of a job to the death of a spouse:

> I think, maybe it was a relief for the other people to have her gone, too, because what do you say to them? What do you say to that person who just loses their husband or wife?

Another worker used a similar metaphor:

> I think he and my supervisor had worked together for about 15 years, so it's kind of like losing family.

In speaking about how the acquisition affected him, one participant compared it to a divorce:

> I wouldn't classify it as a death, probably more like a divorce at this point. You've been working with the company for a number of years and all of a sudden you're told the next day you're going to work for another company. You don't know how that other company is going to be handling you.

One person described how, after learning that he would lose his job, he felt so much stress that all he could do was avoid thinking about it for some time. He went out of town and acted like nothing had changed. But there came a time when he had to come back home and deal with it:

> How am I going to survive one day, one week, one month? You try and think it out in increments of time, because if you look out one year, five years or toward retirement, it seems insurmountable. So you kind of go a week, and back it up. At what point can I put my arms around how I'm going to cope with this? So, for us, it was an hour-to-hour basis.

As stated previously, no event happens in isolation and change is constant. The stress of these changes has a cumulative effect:

> And there's times when I just have to get away. I'll take mental health days. The stress, and not so much the stress from the people, but sometimes because they're bickering back and forth. But it's just overall stress, too many machines are going down, too many people are fighting, and the boss is on your back. Instead of your boss helping you with some of the problems you've got, he's just adding to it.

Another person noted how changes in her personal life and changes in her work life would build on each other. When facing a potential change at work, she didn't think it was something she needed to be concerned with, as she had a number of resources to draw upon and she didn't want to increase her level of stress any further:

> There has been more of a turmoil in my life, personally, in the last couple of years. This, at least, was stable so I stuck with this. I was dealing with those things and it's just easier to stay with what you're doing.

Not everyone found the same change events stressful. One person, who believed he had a number of skills, didn't find losing his job that stressful. In fact, quite the opposite was the case:

> I tell people that when I got laid off it was one of the better times of the last few years. I guess change doesn't really bother me that much. When it happened it was, of course, a little, y'know, disturbing and stuff, but it wasn't really that bad. I kind of figured that something would come up and things would be all right. So I played a lot of golf and things like that in the time that I was laid off.

Many people reported a sense of relief when the anticipated event actually happened. When the event finally happened, they could stop worrying and move on:

> I think at that point [THE EVENT HAPPENED] it became easier for people. Something did happen instead of just rumors of things happening for so long.
>
> I think there was actually relief when it happened, to tell you the truth. When we were acquired at least, although most people really didn't know [THE NEW COMPANY] but I think it was more relief.

Anticipatory Coping Actions

For most of the participants, the anticipatory analysis and the associated stress led directly to engaging in coping actions. However, a number of participants reported that, although they knew a change event was coming and that they would be affected, they delayed taking action until something specific happened that spurred them into motion. These "triggers" marked the beginning of their coping behaviors. The triggers somehow made the anticipated change more "real" or concrete.

Facing a potential job loss, one manager noted:

> Even though I knew I could have been [LAID OFF], I never did a damn thing about it until I found out I was on the list. And then I did something.

The same person told how his subordinates reacted when he told them their jobs would be ending soon:

> [How did they react to being told they would be laid off?] I think favorably. None of them did anything about it but at least they knew. [What could they have done?] They could have gone home, they could have gone out and looked for another job. They were told, "You go find a job. Don't stay for some false hope. We don't want you to think maybe it will change." They've been told we're going to [ELIMINATE YOUR JOB], we're going away, don't go around with a sense of false hope.

Another manager didn't take action until the change was upon him:

> [What happened that made you finally realize that there was change in the wind?] I started laying off people.

Perhaps people simply didn't want to believe that the event would actually happen:

> I mean you can tell people over and over and over again that this is the way it's going to be, and there will always be some element of denial.

Anticipatory coping actions are actions taken in response to the anticipatory analysis. Their purposes are fourfold: (a) to influence the individual's level of risk exposure and event control, (b) to reduce potential losses and maximize potential gains, (c) to mobilize resources, and (d) to reduce the stress associated with the potential change. To accomplish these four goals, people took actions that would effect their financial situation and their interpersonal relationships.

Financial Coping Actions

Preevent financial coping actions included limiting debt, conserving assets, and making assets more easily available. One person explained how she prepared:

> Maybe try to put more money in the bank; you certainly don't need two vehicles or something like that. You can set yourself up a little bit better financially.

Another person, while denying he saw it happen, raised the idea of converting stock into cash:

> I don't think any of them were cashing in stocks or cutting back on food .

Many people mentioned delaying purchases when faced with an event that might cost them their job:

> When those kind of situations are going on, if you're going to buy a used car or something, you might think about saving the money instead. You have to be practical about it, like anybody.

Interpersonal Coping Actions

Interpersonal coping actions refer to the use of social relationships to help deal with an anticipated change. Through these actions an individual's risk exposure, event control, and level of stress may have been changed. It is possible that the interpersonal coping actions may also have reduced the potential costs of the change. Resources were mobilized in the form of securing assistance from others or drawing from one's own psychological or emotional reserves.

The interpersonal actions people took to cope with an anticipated change may be described by a matrix having the dimensions of "Direction" and "Participants." (See Table 1.) There are three potential directions: "toward," "away from," and "against." Direction refers to the nature of the relationship between the participants. "Toward" indicates a positive relationship, that the participants are moving closer together. "Away from" represents increasing distance in the relationship between the participants. "Against" represents an adversarial relationship. (The "direction" dimension of this matrix is very similar to a conceptualization of relationships developed by the neo-Freudian analyst, Karen Horney (1950) to describe the social development of children. However, her model was specific to the interactions between children and society and did not discuss the relationships addressed in this matrix.)

The "Participants" dimension refers to the actors engaged in the interaction. This model is primarily a model of interaction between an individual and himself or herself, another individual, a group, or the organization. However, because some of the participants spoke about relationships at the group level, these were included in the model. The classification of the group actions was difficult as it was often unclear if the participants were referring to individuals or groups in their responses. Often a participant would use a plural form when referring to an individual.

Table 1

Coping Actions Matrix

	Direction		
Participants	Toward	Away	Against
Individual Level	(+)	(-)	(*)
Individual - Self	In/Se/+	In/Se/-	In/Se/*
Individual - Other	In/Ot/+	In/Ot/-	In/Ot/*
Individual - Group	In/Gr/+	In/Gr/-	In/Gr/*
Individual - Organization	In/Or/+	In/Or/-	In/Or/*
Group Level			
Group - Self	Gr/Se/+	Gr/Se/- (a)	Gr/Se/* (a)
Group - Other	Gr/Ot/+	Gr/Ot/-	Gr/Ot/*
Group - Group	Gr/Gr/+	Gr/Gr/-	Gr/Gr/* (a)
Group - Organization	Gr/Or/+	Gr/Or/-	Gr/Or/* (a)

(a) Indicates that there were no data in this cell.

This matrix is not designed to attach value to any of the identified strategies. Its purpose is to show the range of responses and how the dimensions of participants and direction interact. Actions may or may not be successful depending on the situation. This matrix serves to classify the actions, not assign value to them.

The actions are not mutually exclusive. Depending on circumstances, a person may engage in any number, or combination, of these actions.

Each of these 24 relationships is explained and illustrated.

Individual/Self/Toward (In/Se/+)

In this case, an individual took constructive steps to deal with the stress of the event and maintained a strong self-image. The individual recognized his or her emotional reaction and attempted to deal with it directly.

After losing his job, one person took some time off to relieve the stress. Then he took actions to make himself more marketable.

> Well, the first couple of weeks were a blast. I just loved the freedom. I did a lot of ice fishing and got caught up on a lot of things that I'd always said I'd do if I was ever in that position. I played, basically. I promised myself one month off, just to play. I attended a job search seminar and spent some time working on that stuff. My mother had a computer, so I, because I had been doing a lot of programming and really enjoyed it, I started setting my sights on that and teaching myself new software.

Another participant spoke of his need to get away from the stress of work:

> I've also kind of had a benefit in that my family has always had recreational homes, things like that. Now I have one but, at the time, it was my parents'. I always had an opportunity to not only go home, but on weekends, I would just get out of there. You would get away from it for awhile. Yeah, yeah, and I've always loved the water, so I'd just go spend my time on the water; whether it was swimming, skiing, boating or whatever, I would just take off.

Individual/Self/Away (In/Se/-)

This type of action was characterized by denial of one's emotional responses. It was commonly reported in association with layoffs, by both the persons who feared being fired and the managers who had to deliver the bad news. One participant told how he had made a number of major financial commitments after being told his position was secure. Then there was a change in management and he lost his job:

> So I decided, because I didn't want to really cope or deal with the truth or the facts, I wanted to tuck it away in my memory bank for awhile longer, and leave the state. We had plans to attend a wedding out of state, so we immediately packed up and pulled our children out of the school. We left the state, which was a way of; (we didn't realize it at the time) but it was a perfect coping mechanism. We went to another state and participated in a wedding and never told a soul what had happened to us. We left and we acted and spent money and did things as though nothing had ever happened. We did that for close to a week. We disciplined ourselves to wipe it out of our mind, focus on our children, focus on family and relatives out of state, focus on the wedding, and it worked. It worked. It gave us some breathing room.

Firing people was very stressful. One manager was said to have quit because of the stress it caused. Denial, what many people termed "putting on emotional blinders," was necessary to be able to continue to function:

> But if you become emotionally involved, it tears you up. You just can't, you have to do something to protect your own sanity.

Denial was easier if the event could be framed as impersonal:

> Yeah, the course was set by [THE NEW OWNER'S] executive management to fit a business need. It wasn't personal, it's just business.

Or if the person could deny any responsibility for the action:

> It was corporate-level direction. I just executed it. I had a lot to say on how it was going to be done and when it was going to be done, but not that it was going to be done.

It became easier with practice:

> [WHEN LAYING PEOPLE OFF] I think the first one was difficult, the second one was easy. I became immediately immune and I did it.

Or if the person delivering the message also felt at risk:

> [WHEN LAYING PEOPLE OFF] I'd block it out, a very easy task. It was a function to do. It had to be done. Because I felt all along that my boss could do the same thing to me.

Individual/Self/Against (In/Se/*)

An individual who engaged in self-destructive behaviors, guilty feelings, or self-denigrating internal dialog or who experienced stress-related illness was said to be moving against self.

One person, while intellectually aware that she had no control over an unpleasant event, still expressed guilt over her role:

> I think it was psychological. To this day I'm still hard on myself. I feel guilty as though I might have caused that to happen.

Another person had her self-value closely tied to how she functioned as a new member on a team. Note how she attached a label to herself in the following quotation:

> I saw it as, well, if this is what is expected being a part of this team, I'm certainly going to find out fast. If I don't make it, I'm going to have to deal with the fact that I'm a failure. And when you're a fairly competitive person, failure doesn't come easy. (Emphasis added)

Stress related illness ranged from the relatively mild:

> At home, I guess I take home a lot of stress. I've got sore shoulders all the time.

to the extreme:

> The stress, feeling so incapacitated to not be able to support my family, was so overwhelming for me, mentally, that I couldn't sleep nights. I would go for three days straight without sleeping for one minute. My mind would run and rush so fast. I couldn't relax enough to sleep. So I became angry with myself. I couldn't rest. A month after I received my notification that I was being terminated, my lungs collapsed due to stress

> level, according to the medical diagnosis. So I ended up in the hospital on two occasions. They tried to revive my lungs and they weren't able to reinflate them. They had to use mechanical means to reinflate my lungs and got them up. Then they recollapsed again, and then they mechanically reinflated them. My lungs were just like a yo-yo, going up and down. Not having any medical history of any type of a lung problem, they said this is obviously a stress issue, and you're too hard on yourself.

Individual/Other/Toward (In/Ot/+)

In this case an individual coped by strengthening his or her relationship with another individual. When positively described, this type of action was referred to as "using one's network." When derogatorily stated, it became "playing politics."

> But, ironically, the director here stayed in contact with the director of this other company. Between the two of them they invited me back and collected my resume, offered to pass it on, and gave me some recommendations for potential job leads.

> Here it's more of a political kind of situation. If you're on the good side of your boss and he's happy with what you're doing, you're probably going to get a little better payout. With the [OLD COMPANY] structure you had to please your boss, but if you achieved your goals you'd still get your payout independent of what your boss said at this point. So it's a little more on the personality side within [THE NEW COMPANY].

Individual/Other/Away (In/Ot/-)

Using this type of action, individuals distance themselves from other individuals. Some participants spoke about how they would turn away from other workers in times of change:

> There were very few people inside that I wanted to talk to about it. I spent a lot of time talking to people outside about it. I talked to the parish priest, and my friends in the community, and, like I say, the people here that were not directly involved in this at all.

Another participant described how some people would ignore others rather than help (move toward) them. They did not take actions against the other persons; they simply ignored them:

> They'll focus hard on their own area and have a tendency to put blinders on if they see a problem in another area. If it doesn't impact them, they'll put the blinder on. They'll keep right on truckin'. They won't stop and say, "Wait a minute I think you've got something going wrong." It won't affect them, let them fail. "I'll keep right on going, I will stay on that path, I will focus on what I've got to do to survive."

Individual/Other/Against (In/Ot/*)

In this case an individual actively took action to undermine or sabotage another person:

> However, if you're on the border between middle third and bottom third it can be fairly backbiting. People tend to figure out who's on the top and who's on the bottom. People can be cruel, and people will try to give management some input that this person really did this and it really wasn't right, but that's petty stuff that comes with fear and uncertainty.
>
> To try to get over the line to bounce somebody else down, sure. They could do it with backbiting, or try to do something very extraordinary that would set them up in the eyes of management. Y'know it can be a motivator for some and a demotivator for others.

Individual/Group/Toward (In/Gr/+)

When using this type of coping action, an individual associated more closely with a work group. In this example, a new member of a management team spoke about how she became part of the group through an intense period of work:

> So, the nice thing is that the six people that were part of this management group turned out to be a family, we molded immediately. I worked with these guys not only six days a week, but on Sundays we went to church together, we ate together, we swam together, we did everything together, and we're talking eight weeks we did this. And so I was brought into this family, not only their wives and spouses and children, but we lived together basically.

Another person spoke with pride of being associated with a good work group:

> I think that's probably what I liked about my job, being busy, having a good crew. I mean you're only as good as the folks that work with you. We don't have any deadbeats, everybody comes in in the morning, they're here to work.

Individual/Group/Away (In/Gr/-)

This type of action was characterized by an individual's taking actions to lessen his or her association with a group. A quote used previously to illustrate stress is useful in demonstrating how an individual may move away from the group:

> And there's times when I just have to get away. I'll take mental health days. It's just overall stress, too many machines are going down, too many people are fighting, and the boss is on your back. Instead of your boss helping you with some of the problems you've got out in the floor, they're just adding to it.

Another person spoke about not wanting to be associated with a group of people who had lost their jobs for fear that, if he were laid off, he'd:

> Have been out there scrambling like the rest of them. Those that survived no longer feel any compelling reason to support [THE GROUP]. They're there for the job. (Emphasis added)

Individual/Group/Against (In/Gr/*)

Sometimes individuals took action to undermine a group. One manager explained how he used this type of behavior:

> I was constantly back and forth and we were getting into some turf battles. I have complete authority of the system to this day. When I found the people just weren't responding, I'd yank their passwords, I wouldn't even let them on the system. I said, "If you can't do it right you're not doing it," and I started to pull some of that work back into my group, which I knew was just suicide because my group had more than enough work to do.

Individual/Organization/Toward (In/Or/+)

Individuals using this type of coping action identified more closely with the mission or goals of the organization. One person, in line for promotion, said:

> I went to my boss and told him, as soon as he comes up with a name, to let me know. In the meantime I was going to take the area and basically take the bull by the horns and start taking care of some of these projects that needed to be done.

Others spoke of how they prepared for the acquisition:

> [What kinds of things did you do to prepare for that change?] The only thing I tried to do was keep the area groomed. I'd make sure everything is put away, everything looks halfway decent. I mean, we're a business, y'know,"Hey, you want to sell us?" "Fine, just make an impression on our new customer or our new owner."
>
> Well, I try to prepare myself for it. If it's a major change, a new owner, how can I impress them?

Sometimes this coping action was viewed as insincere or, at least, short-lived:

> I would think though that the guys on the lower [THIRD OF THE WORKFORCE IN TERMS OF PERFORMANCE] would, all of a sudden, start coming in on weekends and whatnot. They would be working late and just trying to improve their status and whatever. But like I said, it's too late then anyway.
>
> If they think they were falling short, maybe they would suck it up for a little while and then try working a little harder. But, basically, they're going to do what they've always done. This doesn't mean they're bad or didn't do a good job, it's just that people are people and there's a wide range of abilities there.
>
> I think the people who aren't going to lose their jobs will at least temporarily work a little bit harder, just to make sure they don't.

Individual/Organization/Away (In/Or/-)

In some cases participants reported coping actions that reflected a less close association with the organization and its goals. Perhaps the clearest example of this coping action is when someone chooses to leave the organization voluntarily. An example of this is a person who decided to transfer out of the division to a more secure area of work:

> There are a couple of individuals that, by themselves, decided that they wanted to take on different functions and no longer work within the organization. They asked for transfers to different places within the organization, to move out of marketing, maybe into the technical area.

One person who had advance notice that her job was ending was less concerned with the organizational goals:

> She had 30 days to look around and find other work because she was going to be going out the door. She pretty much let the area slide and I was doing all the engineering work in there.

Another worker noticed a change in her peers' behavior when the group was facing a potential layoff:

> That changed their work habits. A lot of people called in sick, took more time off, so then that reflects on the work. The ones that came in every day, their workload was increased because of the people that didn't come in.

By moving away from the organization, some people hoped to reduce their risk of being laid-off:

> I think there were individuals who were a little reluctant to complete some projects they were working on for fear that those projects would come to termination. I had some of that myself. Why should I work on this particular activity if the activity is going to be cancelled before it gets done? Why put this effort into it? I tended to direct my efforts towards those things that I felt had a higher likelihood of going to fruition and being completed.

Individual/Organization/Against (In/Or/*)

Some individuals coped with change by taking steps to undermine or sabotage the organization. No participant admitted to engaging in this type of action nor did they have any first hand knowledge of this happening. However, many said that there was a real potential for this type of event. To prevent this from happening, terminated employees were walked out the door as soon as they received their notice. One person, who had been laid-off and then rehired, though defending the policy, admitted that it was painful:

> Typically within [THE NEW COMPANY] it has been the policy here that when somebody is terminated they are escorted out the same day. They feel hurt by it. All of a sudden their family unity has been severed and they have difficulty accepting that. I think, in most cases though, that's the right decision. They really shouldn't be on site because you don't always know how they're going to become rabble-rousers within the organization and polarize other folks against the company. You have to have some family unity within the group to benefit the company.

An employee who had been fired and rehired expressed some disappointment that the organization would think him capable of this type of action:

> It bothered me [BEING WALKED OUT THE DOOR]. I felt like they didn't trust me anymore. It was like they were afraid I'd turn around and stab 'em in the back. It's like, "Geeze, you guys know me; I'm not that kind of person," but that was the way they had to handle it.

In a nontaped interview, one employee told how he had been directed to spend an entire weekend changing computer passwords so that the people who were being terminated the following Monday would not be able to access the computers and perhaps steal or erase files.

Group/Self/Toward (Gr/Se/+)

When a group moved toward itself, it became more cohesive and developed a stronger group identity. This was a frequently mentioned coping action:

> There were a group of us that were impacted at the same time, so we kind of just commiserated together and went through our negative thought pattern. Then we tried to do the positive thought pattern to say, "Well something good's going to come out of this for all of us and let's try to work on that aspect of it." It was kind of like throwing sticks at [THE OLD COMPANY] mostly the first day.

> Their own personal pride kept that system up and running. It was just pure pride in what they were doing, pride in their own self, their own organization. Our operators, their little group.

> I don't see anybody taking on another extra job, but I do see my people pulling together. I have the situation where every job I have has to have somebody there all the time. I can't close the mailroom because Suzy's sick today. I can't stop security things because somebody's on vacation. I've got cross-training in all the jobs, so I have a group that really works well together. They just all pull in and do their part.

Group/Self/Away (Gr/Se/-)

A group moving away from itself was characterized by a lessening of group cohesion or identity. Although none of the participants mentioned this type of behavior, it does seem to be a potential response and logically fits within the framework of the matrix.

There are a number of plausible explanations why there were no quotations to support this type of coping action. It may have been due to the methodology of the study. There were no preconceived notions about these coping actions at the onset of the study; the categories and cells in this matrix grew directly out of the interviews. Had confirmation of the model been the goal, then perhaps supporting quotes would have been sought.

It may have been a function of the participant group or the host organization. Perhaps this response wasn't found because of the nature of the organization or the people interviewed.

Perhaps this type of action actually did not occur.

Still, its inclusion is justified. It has internal and external plausibility. It is necessary for the model to be consistent and complete. Without it, the categories do not seem to be sufficient on logical grounds. Most importantly, it was judged reasonable by the participants when the model was presented to them at the end of the project.

The lack of supporting quotations for some of the types of coping actions of groups is of less importance than a lack of evidence supporting individual responses would be because the main focus of this research centered on the individual.

Group/Self/Against (Gr/Se/*)

A group moving against itself would be characterized by actions designed to undermine and subvert its own process and goals. Again, there were no data that fit this cell in the matrix. It was included for the same reasons listed above.

Group/Other/Toward (Gr/Ot/+)

Participants reported that groups made overtures to individuals to try to establish a relationship with the individual, or perhaps to have the individual join the group. In the first example, a group of former coworkers invited an individual to join them. In the second example, the work group wanted to move toward the new boss, hoping to understand his expectations better:

> Word got out that I was looking, so some of my former teammates from this corporation called me up and invited me just to come over and look around at a position.
>
> The biggest thing that you would find is people always want to find out who's running the show and how does he want it run. You like to satisfy your boss' desires. The first operations review was somewhat shaky because you don't know what to expect.

Group/Other/Away (Gr/Ot/-)

This action was characterized by a group moving away from an individual, attempting to separate itself from the person. One production worker found this type of response uncomfortable:

> The lower group, as I recall, tended to avoid me most of the time. If I didn't initiate the conversation, I wouldn't hear from them. The upper group continued to stop by to say "Hi." I would still make the rounds even then, as I always did in the morning, but you just didn't see much of them.

Group/Other/Against (Gr/Ot/*)

Groups threatened to take actions to subvert an individual. Although not directly stating that this type of event happened, one participant did hint at it. Woe betide the manager who alienates his or her work group:

> My current boss has come a long way. He's a lot more cooperative and understanding. If he doesn't help his techs, his techs are not going to help him. We're a very cold group that way. We'll give you a chance, but screw around with us and you've got your work cut out for you to get anything productive.

Group/Group/Toward (Gr/Gr/+)

Groups sometimes dealt with change by working together more closely. In this example two groups that had been marginally cooperative came together to the benefit of both:

> I can tell you about what happened in [ONE PRODUCT GROUP] that I thought was real good. It turned into a very small organization, due to layoffs, and we found that with a smaller group, cooperation between management and engineering was incredible. It was a big team effort because everybody there wanted to save their jobs. Management shared information with production people; they didn't hide anything.

Group/Group/Away (Gr/Gr/-)

Groups were reported to have moved away from each other and to cease cooperation in response to a change event. This happened between two departments:

> We had four different vice presidents that ran their own company. We were not a total company at that point, from what I could see. That was the hardest change for me. And I thought it deteriorated the ability for the company to do what we should have done. I think we were lucky we survived those years.

It also happened between groups who received different performance evaluations:

> [If we typify them as three groups for convenience sake, conversation sake, the upper, lower, and middle, did the relationships between those groups undergo any changes when this threat of a layoff was there?] I think so. I think they tended to segregate themselves. Definitely the upper and lower. They almost broke off all communications between themselves.

Differences in pay, benefits, or perks may also have led to groups' moving apart:

> People that worked in [ONE PRODUCT AREA] hated, almost hated the people in [ANOTHER PRODUCT AREA]. If they made their schedule they got pizza or they got watches or they got all this stuff. People in [THE OTHER PRODUCT AREA] didn't. [Do the two groups interact very much?] No, it's almost like they're on opposite sides of the world. They're always in separate groups; they're never together.

Many references were made to the distinctions, rather than the commonalties, between the acquired company and the acquiring company:

> An isolation of the groups, primarily. A lot of back-biting, a lot of bad words said without the other party in the office. The management styles between the two organizations were vastly different. We were known to be pansies; we weren't hardball players.
>
> We still refer to ourselves as [THE SECOND GROUP], and it's an easy way of saying, "Y'know, that group that we acquired."

For convenience in conversation, the acquiring organization referred to itself as the "A-team." The acquired organization was referred to as the "B-team." One member of the B-team saw this as a clear sign of the distinction between the two groups and that the B-team label implied they were not as capable as the A-team:

> There's [THE A-TEAM] which is the primary company. Then they bought [us] and we became [THE B-TEAM]. Well, that has a connotation in and of itself. A is higher grade; it's number one. B are the second stringers.

Group/Group/Against (Gr/Gr/*)

A group against group action would see one group actually working to undermine the success of another. There were no quotations or reports of this type of action. Although one group may have had hard feelings about another group, and they would move away from them, there was no evidence that any group actively attempted to undermine or work against another group. Again, this is a plausible type of action and is included for reasons cited earlier.

Group/Organization/Toward (Gr/Or/+)

This type of action was characterized by a group accepting more fully or embracing the organization's goals:

> They wanted to impress, which is fine. Make a good impression on the new company, make them want to buy us.

One manager explained how his work-group responded to a change in schedule:

> If there was an area or if there was a particular duty that we felt that we could move into our department and do it better, we would take on the additional responsibilities, even though we were quite busy. We would always try to fill our department, so to speak, with new functions, new responsibilities.

Group/Organization/Away (Gr/Or/-)

Groups were reported to distance themselves from the organizational goals in response to potential change. In one instance the group was described as moving toward itself while moving away from the organization:

> Everybody's wondering, "Where am I going to go? What am I going to do? Who's going to be leading this group? Who's going to be leading that group?" Those are the things that you have the most concern about. You don't always look at how is it going to affect the total company. "How is it going to affect me?" is probably what you look at more, or "How is it going to affect my department?" type of thing.

Group/Organization/Against (Gr/Or/*)

In this type of action, a subgroup would actively work to subvert the goals or health of the larger organization. Although no one in the organization spoke of this type of action, it has been reported in the literature (Boss & McConkie, 1981).

Event Interval

At some point, all the waiting and anticipation were over, and the event actually happened. For some events, the time it took for the event to occur was very easy to define. For example, it was easy to define the event interval for moving a factory. The start and end dates of the move were easy to identify. Some events happened very quickly. Losing a job could happen in a matter of minutes. Other changes were much more difficult to define. For example, a shift in management philosophy or a change in product demand may have taken place over a period of years. The actual start and end of such an event was much more difficult to specify.

The event interval is important with regard to how people regard an event and react to it.

Length of the Event Interval

The time from the beginning of an event to the end of the event was termed the event interval. Participants noted that some events took longer to complete than others. For some, this "transition time" was helpful. One participant explained how this transition time helped her return to a full-time job after being on medical disability status:

> [You kind of eased into the full-time job; you said you went six hours, four hours, six hours, and it sounds like that helped] I think it did a lot, just psychologically if not physically, it helped a lot. [How did it help psychologically?] Well, because I think it was just so frightening to go eight-hour days. If you could just work six hours one day and then four hours the next day [IT WAS EASIER] and my manager was just terrific. He said, "Don't push yourself; if you don't feel like you can do it, don't." It was just such a gradual thing that it didn't seem like it was as difficult. I think if I had just gone from 4 hours a day to 8 hours a day it just would have made me crazy.

Another worker explained how a gradual transition to a new compensation system helped in accepting the change:

> We were assured that there would be a transition period for benefits and hospitalization. I was in an HMO; it stayed the same. There was really no change. We stayed with a lot of the [THE OLD COMPANY] services until we could get things sorted out. In fact, we still have some of those leftover from that time. So those types of things were handled very well and made the transition rather easy on the employees.

Some events, continued over too long a period of time, became stressful:

> When I was a group manager, I was laying people off. In the last three or four years it's been a constant theme and it gets to be very, very depressing. You kind of get a chip on your shoulder because there's no opportunity. So you just go to work and you do this, but there's no future.
>
> [IN RESPONSE TO A LONG STRESSFUL TIME] It really starts to be emotionally draining. It's just so intense for so long. No one ever took a day off; you couldn't afford to take a day off.

A short event interval might have been desirable or undesirable, depending on the situation:

> I don't think there were a lot of fears; they were laid to rest pretty quickly. The transition went very quick and went quite well.
>
> I know that the group that I was working with would have liked to have heard that things are going to be O.K. and that we're going to get to understand what management wants. These changes happen so quickly, and that was part of it. The move to [ANOTHER CITY] was done even before the merger was completed. The moving of products to [ANOTHER COUNTRY] were happening almost immediately. The change in executive management happened all around. I know of two or three vice presidents that were released within the first three months.

Closure

Participants indicated that having a symbol or ceremony to represent a change event helped in their acceptance of the event. The symbol helped people define the change. Without a symbol, a change could be more difficult to accept. The symbol made the event more concrete, more real.

One participant spoke of a need for some symbol that the acquisition had occurred. The actual acquisition took place over the weekend. The following Monday, when he came into work, he was hoping to find a letter or memo welcoming him to the new company. He had expected that someone would have come in over the weekend to put letters on everyone's desk. When this did not happen, he was disappointed.

Another person spoke of looking for some sign that the acquisition had happened:

> I really think that the [ACQUISITION], the way we did it from one to another, was carry on with the old policies. They did not really see the change. It was in the title of the company. But in my own personal life, because I'm so removed from that, there was no change. And it was very difficult because we were getting from our organization: "You are our company; if we tell you we need this report we need this report." And yet it was almost like, "I didn't have to do it in the past, so why do I have to do it now?"

Another person also described a lack of evidence of the change. He drove the same route to work, parked in the same place, went in the same door, did the same work with the same people in the same environment. This made it hard to acknowledge that the change had actually taken place:

> I think that if you sever your employment with a company and if you seek other employment with a different company, you know you have to learn new policies and you understand that you're making that change. The type of movement that we had, because it was transition and no one went out and sought this change, to get them to stop thinking [THE OLD COMPANY] and to start thinking [THE NEW COMPANY] has been very, very difficult.
>
> We reinforced a nonchange in our behavior because what we told our managers was to continue as is until you hear differently. So it was hard for us to understand, and it was very difficult to try and help the managers in that transition.

Individuals and groups created symbols to represent certain events and, in so doing, made the changes easier:

> Then, as I was leaving, the last day I was going to be in there, they gave me a big going-away party and all this food and everything. It was really nice.
>
> I would have liked a little congratulatory party like we used to do at [THE OLD COMPANY]. The guys come around and we have a little cocktail party and we have some hors d'oeuvres and so forth. A little hoopla would have been nice.
>
> On the 31st we shipped our 46,000th [PRODUCT], which we had framed.

Postevent Interval

The postevent interval was defined as the period of time from the completion of an event until the next event was identified. It is important to remember that these are not distinct stages or steps. They are so labeled only for the sake of explanation and understanding.

In the postevent interval, people reflected on the event, compared it with their anticipatory analysis, and dealt with the results of the event.

Postevent Assessment

The postevent assessment was similar to the anticipatory analysis with a few notable exceptions. People now attempted to determine: (a) how their risk exposure had changed, (b) how their event control had changed, (c) what they actually gained or lost in comparison to their anticipatory cost/benefit analysis, and (d) what resources they had to help them deal with the effects of the event. People used the same types of coping actions as when anticipating a change, except that they now could no longer attempt to alter the course of the event. In reviewing the event, people also and made judgments about its fairness, or the justice of the event. Not everyone evaluated the same factors, nor were they conducted in any set sequence.

Risk Exposure

After the event, people attempted to judge the effect the change had on the probability that they would be affected by future events:

> Cuts were made. Now, of course, the concern is, "Gee, is that the end of it or is there more coming?" There were wholesale cuts and then more cuts and so on and so forth. People didn't know whether or not that's what they were facing. So there was a certain fear about the stability of the organization.
>
> Well, there was conversation about who left and why, a personal sorting-out process. "Where do I stand?" with regard to the three levels that you mentioned earlier--on the fringe, in the middle, or secure? I think everybody kind of reassessed that and then got back to work to solve the problems.
>
> [You were still worried about layoffs?] Yeah, layoffs, but, would we still be in [THIS CITY]? Would they want a [LOCALLY]-based [PLANT], since they're from [ANOTHER STATE]? Do they want a [LOCALLY]-based company?
>
> You started to feel a bit more vulnerable and say, "If it happened that quick once, it could very well happen that quick again."

Event Control

Postevent, people evaluated how much control they actually had over the event and how the event affected them. A number of participants indicated that a lack of control led to some frustration:

> When you can make the choice of whether or not you're working for a company, that's one thing. When you don't have the choice, I just think you want to be out. I really think bitterness sets in right away.

> This person didn't create the situation, management did, so that's harder.
>
> I guess it's a sense of a lack of control of the situation that's frustrating.

Actual Cost-Benefit Assessment

After the event, people compared what they had actually gained and lost with the results of their anticipatory analysis. Financial comparisons were very common:

> So far I would say the sacrifices haven't been worth what you get out of the profit sharing. Then again, they might eventually play themselves out. The financial health of the company; that still might take time to grow.
>
> A month after they took us over, October 1st, the next month was Thanksgiving. Everybody got a $30 Thanksgiving check in the mail to buy a turkey or whatever you wanted. They said, "I was with [THE OLD COMPANY] 15 years and I never seen one of these." Then at Christmas [THE NEW COMPANY] liked to shut down that week. Our people had already used up most of their holidays, so they would have had to take vacation to cover those times. Well, [THE NEW COMPANY] said that for those people, we're giving them two extra holidays this year and we're shutting down that week and they still won't have to use only like one day of vacation to get a full week's pay. People said, "Hmmm, [THE OLD COMPANY] never gave us two extra holidays. Maybe this company's not so bad." I think that's the way people started thinking.
>
> I picked up all the seniority while I was gone, so I gained like 15 months of seniority. There were some other benefit sort of things, but then there were some negatives. I lost some medical coverage that had been available to cover the period of retirement.
>
> What had been shared at [THE OLD COMPANY] was losses. Now [THE NEW COMPANY] had an environment in which you were going to share profits, and people were skeptical. But one of the real positives was that at the end of the first quarter, by golly, here came that profit-sharing check.

One person reported how returning to the work force caused her tc lose some control over her personal time and social relationships:

> It was irrational, it was stupid, I was crazy. I've gotten a little bit spoiled in the fact that I could do with my afternoons what I wanted. Now, all of a sudden, you're forced into this and, at that time, none of my friends worked. If they had a luncheon going on, I could go have a luncheon with them if I wanted. I almost resented the fact that I had to work full time when my friends didn't, which is irrational, stupid, crazy, but it was one of those things. That's how I was feeling.

One manager said that some people felt a loss of control and status in the organization:

> They looked at themselves as being equal to the individual to whom they reported. Therefore, "I don't think I want to work for this company any longer." Or they may have looked at it and said, "I had total responsibility for this organization and directing where the organization was going to go, and now I'm simply going to be a division within this larger company"--losing a lot of the feeling of the autonomy that he had of controlling the organization. Now he was going to be told what to do rather than directing what's going to be done.

Resource Assessment

The postevent resource assessment is part of the postevent assessment. People judged the effect of the change event on resources they had available to deal with future events. One participant spoke about how a change in duties had forced him to learn new skills. These skills were resources which made him more confident of his ability to deal with future events:

> As I got into the project, the light came on and I realized I'm getting new skills here, skills that are definitely going to be used by a lot of companies in the future. I was thinking, "What I could do is go to another company and show them how to run one of these things, plus, with my materials background, I could also help them there if they wanted the help."

Justice Assessment

After a significant event, people looked back on the event and evaluated it in terms of its fairness or justice. They assessed the event in relation to the process by which the event unfolded, including: (a) an assessment of the legitimacy of the event, (b) how people were informed about the event, (c) the decision rules used to determine who would be affected, (d) how these rules were developed, and (e) how people were compensated for the effects of the event.

Most of the participants believed that the acquisition and layoffs were legitimate in that they were needed to strengthen the overall organization:

> So we looked at it and said, "OK, we're combined together with a company that's in the same main line, selling the same product line and [PRODUCTS] as we are." In fact, we took a look at their products and it looked like it was such a neat merger in that [THE NEW COMPANY] had the low end of the line and [THE OLD COMPANY] [THE OLD DIVISION] had the high end of the line. If you took a look at the overlap of the products, there were very few that overlapped. It wound up providing a product line all the way from the very smallest to the very largest. And so, I think, we conceptually bought that very quickly and said it looks like it's a good merger of two good, strong companies. It would make us the strongest company in the industry, and the largest, next only to [ANOTHER COMPANY].

Some saw the layoffs as just and necessary for the survival of the company:

> In other words, we had to sacrifice those 600 domestic jobs to stay viable as a company for the other 6,000 people who worked for [THE OLD DIVISION]. So I think you can justify it.

Whereas, others saw the same event differently:

> They've been preaching lifetime employment, that type of thing, and then you start laying off these people.

Some participants mentioned that they wanted to be fair in letting the people who were to be affected know about the change well in advance:

> Picking the right people and giving sufficient notice. Be fair with them, be fair with them. Don't lie to them. Don't tell them their job is safe and then fire them.
>
> [WHEN LAYING PEOPLE OFF] We would indicate to the employee whether they were in the top, middle, or lower third of the totem pole, to give them an indication. It was to be fair to the employee so that if they wanted to take the initiative, to start looking, based on what they knew about the business, then they could take the initiative and be more prepared, which was a fair approach.

Assessments of justice were based on the rules that decided who would be affected by the change:

> That does bring up a point that I remember clearly. A lot of people were a little miffed at the fact that there wasn't really a lot of layoffs, there was some, but it was very little middle management or management. It was all these peons or whatever, that sort of thing, so I think a lot of people were miffed about that.
>
> I think the way a lot of people looked at it is a lot of those people probably really weren't contributing to the bottom line, or at least someone else could maybe pick up the slack on what they had been doing.

Some voiced concern over how the rules were developed:

> They were very frustrated because there was a change coming that they had no participation in. Normally, when you move from one company to another company, it's at your initiation. This move was a move that was forced upon them. I think what you saw was a rebellion, an anger, that: "You can't do this, you shouldn't be doing this to me, I didn't ask for this change." And so I think that they were a little upset that that some people got together and made a decision on their lives.

One participant spoke with some disgust over the seemingly arbitrary manner in which one decision was made:

> He would come out with a memo, "I've heard that people have got video games or some people may have video games on their micros. Anybody having that should be terminated immediately." Just a directive like that.

Being treated equally often meant being treated fairly:

> If he can get it, I can get it. So lay 'em off, wish 'em the best of luck. If they come knocking on your door, you know where you're going. That was the attitude I took, very simple.
>
> My management were as helpful as they could be to anybody because they were probably in the same situation, also. I mean, everybody was in that same type of situation.

One person was disappointed that his promotion was met with little enthusiasm, but as he was being treated just like everyone else, it was fair:

> And so, yeah, I would have liked a little congratulatory party like we used to do at [THE OLD COMPANY]. The guys come around and we have a little cocktail party, and we have some hors d'oeuvres and so forth. A little hoopla would have been nice. But I got promoted at the same time as a couple other people in the organization and they had basically the same kind of reaction that I did. They got the same kind of reception that I did, "Well, nice going, congratulations. Why are you standing around jaw-boning when you should be working?"

How people were compensated for changes (especially layoffs) played an important role in the assessment of the justice of an event. Some people found executive compensation unjust:

> He's really good. I hate to think of anybody making that kind of money, though. I'm happy with what I make. It's like the pro baseball players; nobody deserves three million a year.
>
> It happened at a time when a few of the old executives took some significant golden-parachute-type of payoffs, virtually millions of dollars, about the same time when people were asked to take 10% cuts in pay or 5 days off without pay. It was very difficult to see an executive, who virtually was terminated, get 4 million dollars, compared to someone doing an excellent job taking 5 days off or 10 days off without pay.

Another person was not really concerned over the absolute amount of money:

> I don't know if they have golden parachutes or not. I guess I really don't care as long as they treat me fair. I really don't have any complaints in regard to that.

Length of the Postevent Interval

The postevent interval was defined as the time after an event occurred until the recognition of another potentially significant event. This definition is artificial, as it could be argued that the postevent interval stretches out to an indeterminate time in the future. It was defined as finite to show how the rate of change influenced people's reactions.

If changes happened frequently, if there was little time between significant events, then people did not have the opportunity to evaluate the effect of the change before the next event was upon them. Without time for reflection, there was no opportunity to develop a sense of where they stood. This understanding was necessary to provide a basis for future anticipatory analysis.

Many of the people who were interviewed for this project noted, after the tape recorder was off and they were on their way out the door, that they had not had an opportunity to sit down and really think about these events. They were so busy reacting to all the change around them that there was little opportunity for reflection. They stated that they found the interview process pleasant and useful in that it gave them the opportunity to think about some of these issues.

Summary

Based on the analysis of interview data, a model of the organizational change process was developed. Although the model was presented in a logical sequence as a series of steps, this was done only for reasons of understanding and clarity. Change, and people's response to change, is not linear and not necessarily logical. Truly to understand any change event it must be considered in context.

People constantly scan their environment for potentially significant change events. They talk with each other about these events, and through this process they come to an understanding of the relative importance of their findings. Once an event is identified as potentially significant, they conduct an analysis of what the change might mean to them. This analysis causes stress, and people take actions to change the course of the event and/or lower their feelings of stress. Assuming there is adequate time, they will take action and then reassess their position in relation to the change, perhaps leading to additional coping actions. At some point the event actually happens. It is easier to mark the start and finish of some events than of others. Once the event has happened, people assess the effects of the change. The results of this assessment may lead to stress as well as to actions that deal with the effects of the event and its associated stress. This process continues until the stress generated by other events are perceived to be of greater urgency than dealing with the past event. At this point the past event is put on the back burner or forgotten as the person deals with the new conditions. Perhaps the event is revisited in the future, perhaps not, depending on how the environment and events evolve.

CHAPTER 4

COMPARISON OF FINDINGS

This chapter compares the findings of this study with other theories and research regarding organizational change. It is not a literature review, in the traditional sense, as the purpose is not to synthesize prior research and develop hypotheses for testing. Rather, the purpose is to show where this study is congruent with prior writings and where it differs. In so doing, the credibility of this research is further established, its unique contributions are noted, and directions are suggested for further research.

Writings about organizational change may be clustered into four major groups: (a) organizational psychology, which tends to focus on the theory and planning of organizational change; (b) bereavement theory, which focuses on loss and reactions to loss at the personal level; (c) stress and coping theory, which deals with individuals' personal cognitive, behavioral, and emotional response to perceived threats; and (d) management research, which is somewhere between organizational psychology and bereavement theory in terms of scope. For each of these clusters, the major theories and research will be summarized and compared with the results of this study.

Organizational Psychology

Organizational psychology is primarily concerned with the problems of individuals and groups in organizations. It evolved from the field of industrial psychology after World War II. After the war, industrial psychologists expanded into the fields of supervisory and management training, setting the stage for the development of the field now known as organization development. The focus of organizational psychology, in terms of organizational change, is in the development of the theory and methods of planned change.

Lewin's Three-Stage Model of Change

Perhaps the most frequently cited source regarding organizational change is Lewin's (1958) article in which he outlined a three-stage model of change. The three stages of planned change were: unfreezing, moving, and freezing. These stages were actually a very small part of an article that focused on group decision making and changing people's food preferences. This article did not develop the three-stage model nor explain it in any detail. However, others expanded and built upon this model (Burke, 1982; Schein, 1980).

In the first stage, unfreezing, members of the organization are prepared for change, and motivation for change is created by disrupting established beliefs and behaviors. Motivation for change arises from the discomfort experienced when established behaviors are no longer effective. In the second stage, movement, interventions are directed at establishing new behaviors or beliefs. In the third stage, freezing, systems are established to reinforce the new behaviors and make them permanent.

Specific interventions could be developed to achieve the goals of each stage. For example, an organization could disrupt the belief and behavior system of members through programs designed to sensitize them toward specific issues. The organizational reward system could be changed so that established behaviors were no longer effective. Movement might be accomplished through training programs to help the members learn new skills.

New reward and social support systems could be developed to insure that the new behaviors were reinforced and became well established.

Schein (1980) specified several assumptions central to this three-stage model. He stated that organizational changes occured only through the individual changes of key members of the organization; thus, organizational change is always mediated through the changes of individuals. He also stated that most changes, for adults, are inherently painful and threatening.

Sikes (1989) concurred and expanded on Schein's list of assumptions. He stated that people will always resist anything perceived as punishment, and that people are reluctant to endure discomfort, even for the sake of possible gain. Furthermore, all change is experienced as punishing in that it requires, at least, an extra expenditure of energy to learn new behaviors or attitudes. Sikes stated that all change creates stress, especially if the change is out of the control of the people who undergo the change. As an example, he said that although it is stressful to resign from a job, it is more stressful to be fired. This led directly to another of his tenets, that participation in setting goals and mechanisms for change will decrease people's resistance to the change.

Action Research

Action research is an approach to planned organizational change that is based on an iterative process of data collection, feedback, and joint action between a consultant and members of the organization (Burke, 1982). The process begins with the identification of a problem by some key member of the organization. A consultant is introduced who gathers data about the problem and gives feedback to members of the organization. The consultant and members of the organization then work collaboratively to develop and implement actions designed to move the organization in a direction that will address the identified problems or desired change. After the actions are taken, the results are assessed. Data are again collected by the consultant, feedback is given to the client, and another round of joint planning and action occurs. This cycle continues ad infinitum.

Lippitt, Watson, and Westley's Phases of Planned Change

This model of planned change (Lippitt, Watson, & Westley, 1958) may be seen as a combination of Lewin's three-stage model and the action research model. Rather than a repeating cycle of data collection, feedback, and action, the Lippitt et al., model includes a termination stage. After the goals of the planned change have been accomplished, and systems put in place to maintain the change, the consultant terminates the relationship with the organization. Through the change process, the consultant teaches the organization the steps necessary for it to continue to implement change without assistance. Termination of the relationship prevents the organization from becoming dependent on the consultant (and the consultant on the organization) (Burke, 1982).

Comparison and Summary

The research and writings from the field of organizational psychology address the planning of organizational change. This is a proactive view that assumes change can be directed and controlled through the careful application of theory and technique. Its viewpoint is external to the system to be changed. Change is conceptualized in an isolated and serialized manner. It occurs in several stages, or phases, each stage preparing members of the organization for the next stage. Schein (1980) and Lippitt et al., (1958) agree that change happens through changes made by individuals, and that key individuals play a significant role. The process of change is stressful for individuals, especially if the people affected do not have control over how the changes are made.

The model developed in this thesis is much less global. It is not a proactive view of planning for change, but a theory of how individuals react to change. Its perspective is from the inside of the organization undergoing change. It is not concerned with how systems may be designed to plan and implement change, but with understanding how people react to the changes occurring all around them. Although it is presented in a serialized form, it specifically recognizes that change is neither logical nor orderly as it unfolds.

The role of key members of the organization and the importance of individual actions are recognized in this thesis, which is in agreement with these aspects of the planned change model. Stress is also recognized as a natural part of the change process. The model developed through this research also found a direct relationship between an individual's control over an event and the level of stress experienced, although it is only one of many factors that influence the level of stress.

The biggest difference between the findings of this study and the planned organizational change literature is that of scope. The literature on planned change is concerned with the general planning of change in all organizations; this study concerns the individual's experience of change in a particular organization. Therefore, this thesis is much more detailed and specific.

Sike's (1989) contention that all change is considered punishing is not supported by the findings of this thesis. Though all the identified changes were perceived as having costs and benefits, there was no evidence that they were seen as punishing. Furthermore, participants in this study considered both the short- and long-term costs and benefits of change and were willing to endure short-term discomfort to achieve long-term gains. This thesis does support Sike's statement that low levels of control cause high levels of stress. In this research, both high control and very low control were associated with lower levels of stress. Higher levels of stress were reported when people were unsure about the amount of control they had over the event.

Bereavement Literature

The literature of bereavement is grounded in the psychology of the individual and focuses on the losses experienced by the individual in times of change. Each author reviewed herein had a different background and drew upon his or her unique research and experiences in developing theory.

Peter Marris: Loss and Change

Influenced by the writings of developmental psychologist Piaget, Marris (1974) stated that attachment to others is deeply rooted in the human psyche. From childhood, attachments create a sense of security and foster the ability to predict and make sense out of the world. Any change that disrupts these attachments reduces the ability to experience life as meaningful. Grief is the response to a loss of meaning. Social changes disrupt attachments, thus, decreasing people's sense of security and ability to make sense out of their experiences, resulting in grief. Marris stated that the impulse to maintain the predictability of life is a universal principle of human psychology. He called this impulse "conservatism."

Grief, the response to a loss of meaning, may be manifested in many ways, including, but not limited to, somatic complaints, withdrawal, blaming of others for the loss, and hostility toward anyone else who is not suffering the same feelings of loss. The grieving process is seen as necessary for the reintegration of function after a loss. If people are not allowed to experience their grief and go through the grieving process, they might not recover from a loss.

Burke (1982) summarized Marris' writings and concluded that there are two types of loss: loss of the known and loss of control. Loss of the known causes people to face an unpredictable future, to exchange security for insecurity. The need to cope with a new situation generates stress. Burke also stated that people resist losing a sense of control over their future. When the feeling of freedom to choose is threatened, people attempt to regain it. The need for control is so great that people will forgo any actual advantages of an imposed change and struggle against it just to maintain a sense of control.

William Bridges: Transitions

Bridges, who was heavily influenced by the work of Marris, made a strong distinction between the concepts of "change" and "transition" (Bridges, 1980; Bridges, 1986; Bridges, 1988). Change was defined as an event that has a clear start and end. Transition was defined as a psychological process that cannot be as well planned and managed as change. Transition consists of three phases: endings, the "neutral zone," and beginnings.

In the ending phase, people have to let go of their current beliefs and roles before they can move toward a new situation. This ending phase is marked by the experience of grief. Bridges reported that many people used powerful metaphors, such as a death, to describe their sense of loss. The ending phase was described as having three aspects: disengagement, disidentification, and disenchantment.

Disengagement is the severing of relationships with others and results in feelings of grief. This grief is seen as denial, anger, bargaining, and despair.

Disidentification is the loss of role identity. For example, persons who retire may question their identity and value as they are no longer in a particular role.

Disenchantment is marked by the loss of personal meaning associated with the change. Because of the change, life and events no longer seem to make sense. People begin to question the meaning and value of how they have identified themselves and the work they have done. For example, when facing a divorce, a person may wonder if his or her entire marriage was a sham, whether he or she is actually a lovable person, or if the entire institution of marriage might be a falsehood. The only way to pass through disenchantment is to allow the confusion and pain to run its course. It is necessary for the process of transition.

The neutral zone phase is marked by feelings of confusion and emptiness. Past relationships, roles, and understandings are gone, but there is nothing yet to replace them. Bridges described this phase as having three components. "Disorientation" is caused by not having a distinct role upon which to base action and decision-making. "Disintegration" is caused by the breaking of relationships. Past interpersonal conflicts that had been resolved may have resurfaced. "Discovery" is the final component of the neutral zone, in which people start to reorganize and create new structures, roles, and relationships.

The last phase of the transition model is the start of new beginnings. Having recognized that the past is gone, grieved what was lost, and then found order amid what once appeared as chaos, people move toward creating new roles and relationships. Bridges identified six different types of loss that may be experienced when going through a change and associated transition: (a) loss of turf, (b) loss of attachments, (c) loss of meaning, (d) loss of a future, (e) loss of role, and (f) loss of control. Recognition of loss itself might be an issue.

According to Bridges, U.S. organizations tend to avoid the phases of endings and transitions; they jump directly to the beginnings stage. This tendency, he states, may be an outgrowth of our western, pioneer heritage. Managers have been trained and are expected to complete tasks. The idea of mourning and the neutral zone are foreign concepts and are incongruous with the U.S. idea of progress. Still, these phases will occur whether they are planned for or not. When facing changes and transitions, organizations and individuals can facilitate the phases, making them shorter and less traumatic.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross: On Death and Dying

On Death and Dying (Kubler-Ross, 1969) is one of the most referenced works in the bereavement literature. The book grew out of her work with terminally ill people, their families, and the medical staff who took care of them. Her approach to the subject was very much an interpretive, grounded approach. She started simply by talking with dying patients, without reading about the topics, or even reading the patient's charts. She and her colleagues spoke with dying people to learn about their experience of dying. Through thousands of interviews with patients, family members, medical staff, and her colleagues, a five-stage model of the psychological processes of the dying patient emerged.

Stage 1 is denial and isolation. When the person learns that he or she is dying, the first reaction is described as denial. The typical response is, "It can't be." This denial is short lived and followed by what Kubler-Ross calls a partial acceptance.

Stage 2 is anger. The person asks, "Why me?" Anger is displaced in all directions, and it becames difficult for others to interact with the dying person without feeling hostility. Everything experienced by the terminally ill person is connected with his or her death. The sight of happy people on the television serves to remind the individual of his or her impending death. News reports of disasters are interpreted as showing the insignificance of one individual life. Because of the expressions of anger, other people may avoid the ill person, which only reinforces his or her feelings of anger. This anger is seen as a response to a loss of control over life. Much as described by Marris (1974), the person acts to preserve the feeling of control, even opposing actions that would be beneficial. For example, if the person is told to avoid certain foods, he or she may continue to eat them, rather than give up the control over his or her diet.

Stage 3 is termed bargaining. This is really an attempt to postpone the inevitable by "striking a deal" with some higher power. It is usually a short stage.

Stage 4 is depression. The person is unable to deny the signs of approaching death and begins to experience great feelings of loss. These losses vary from person to person. A person may become depressed over the loss of her or his body image. Another may feel the loss of no longer being able to function professionally. Compounding these feelings is the financial burden his or her treatment may be imposing on the family, which adds feelings of guilt to the depression. The losses described to this point are all actual losses due to the illness. There are also reactions to impending losses due to death.

The person is facing the total disruption of all relationships and attachments. While others may have been able to offer reassurance and comfort regarding the actual losses, there is no way to reassure a person about the impending loss of life. There are no words of comfort and the most effective support may be nonverbal. At this time, the dying person starts to look ahead rather than back. This is seen as withdrawal, as the person starts to garner the energy to face death.

If the person has successfully moved through the first four stages, he or she will have had the opportunity to express anger and will have mourned the loss of attachments and friendships. Thoughts of regaining control over the illness are gone. What follows is stage 5, an acceptance of death. This is not a happy or sad time; rather, it is a period devoid of emotion as the person has accepted and resigned him- or herself to death, which usually follows shortly thereafter.

Comparison and Summary

The findings of this research generally support Marris' (1974) work. Many participants in this research spoke about the value of their attachments to other individuals, to groups, and to the organization. Changes that threatened these relationships were perceived as stressful. In accordance with Marris' writings, some people coped with this stress by experiencing various somatic complaints, ranging from the mild (tense muscles) to the severe (a collapsed lung that required lengthy hospitalization). Withdrawal was also seen as a response to change. People would withdraw from their work group or from the organization to cope with stress. They also would withdraw from their own emotions ("put on emotional blinders") as a way of coping. Marris states that hostility toward others who are not experiencing the same changes may be a response to the stress of change. This is congruent with the model developed in this thesis, as individuals may take actions designed to undermine other individuals, groups, or the organization itself. In this research, somatic complaints were conceptualized as a person moving against self.

The significant events described by the participants in this study interfered with their ability to predict and control their future, causing stress. But none of the participants described the loss of attachments and grief as so strong that it interfered with their ability to find meaning in life. The differences between these findings and Marris' may be a matter of degree. The people with whom Marris worked had suffered great losses, such as the death of a spouse, or seeing their entire village destroyed. The participants in this study had faced changes of much less magnitude. In fact, most of the changes described involved very little actual loss. Changes, such as moving from one state to another or surviving a layoff, seem of a much different scale than the changes experienced by the people studied by Marris. Of course, the participants in this study had all survived the organizational changes.

As the work of Bridges (1980, 1986, 1988) was built upon that of Marris, there is a close parallel between them. Bridges' theory is unique in that he makes a distinction between the external process of change and the internal, psychological process of transition. The concept of disengagement is similar to the responses Marris describes as withdrawal. Disidentification and disenchantment are similar to Marris' ideas on the loss of meaning caused by the disruption of relationships. Just as the experience of grief is necessary for the reintegration of meaning in Marris' model, the neutral zone is necessary for people to come to terms with their loss and start the process of developing a sense of the future. Bridges expanded on the types of loss that people may experience to include six different types. Although Marris spoke of only two specific classifications of loss, they are sufficiently broad to include those of Bridges. Like Marris, Bridges also recognized that people's response to loss can be very painful, and referred to the various metaphors used to describe the intensity of the loss.

In general, Bridges used the central concepts reported by Marris and applied them specifically to the organizational setting. He elaborated on them and demonstrated how they are seen in the organizational change process. By so doing, he made them easier to understand and observe in the organizational setting. Finally, he developed several recommendations about how managers can use the transition model to facilitate the process and ease the trauma of organizational change.

His three-phase transition model parallels Lewin's three stages of change. Endings is roughly analogous to Lewin's concept of unfreezing where the established structures are broken down and the stage is set for movement. The neutral zone parallels the concept of movement where the old structures and relationships are gone and the new structures start to emerge. Beginnings marks the establishment of the new order similar to the idea of freezing.

Bridges made a clear distinction between the organizational event of change and the psychological event referred to as transition. He made very little reference to the relationship between the events of change and the internal events of transition. The model developed through this thesis does not make such a distinction but considers the change event and the psychological events as very closely interrelated. This is not to say that there is disagreement between the two models, only to note that the conceptualizations are different. The ending phase is similar to what this research calls the anticipatory interval. It is the time when people begin to prepare for the future and old structures begin to lose value. Bridges does not specifically talk about anticipation directly but it is implicit in his model. There is no analog to what this thesis refers to as the event interval as the actual change events are outside Bridge's model of transition. Transition refers to the psychological mechanisms, not the external events themselves. The postevent interval proposed in this thesis combines the functions of Bridges' neutral zone and beginnings. In this phase people come to recognize the outcomes of the changes, what they have lost and what they have gained. Participants in this research also used powerful metaphors in describing their reactions to change, very similar to those reported by Bridges. The losses reported in this thesis could be analyzed using Bridge's loss taxonomy, and they would match very well.

Bridges' concept of disengagement may be found in the coping actions matrix of this thesis. The severing of relationships is seen as people move away from and against others, groups, and the organization. The confusion and loss of meaning discussed in Bridges' work was not specifically stated through the course of this research. However, its effects could be seen in the coping actions people used. Many participants noted that their self-image was dependent on their relationships and success at work. One person said that she would have regarded herself as a failure if she did not survive a particular change event. Other people mentioned that they would consider being laid-off a personal failing, even if they knew it was not related to their performance.

Bridges' model is primarily concerned with the loss people experience in the processes of change and transition. The model developed in this thesis emphasizes the evaluation of the balance between potential losses and potential gains. While this is implicit in the beginnings phase of Bridge's model, it is not directly addressed.

In summary, the model developed through this thesis offers strong support for Bridges' model. Although the models are conceptualized differently, the evidence presented in each can be used to support the other.

Woodward and Buchholz (1987) and others have been asked if the Kubler-Ross model is applicable as a theory of organizational change. Woodward's answer was a cautious "Yes," as the death model could be seen as a generic model of loss. He states that the death model and the process of organizational change are both stage models; a person must successfully complete one stage before moving on to the next.

Upon close examination, the death and dying model is so unique and specialized that it is not appropriate for use as a model of the organizational change process. It may be argued that certain aspects fit what Kubler-Ross has reported. However, applying the death and dying model to the process of organizational change requires considerable forcing of the data. Overall, the process of death is not comparable to the process of organizational change.

The subject and the object of study in the Kubler-Ross model is the person him- or herself. The other bereavement studies focused on the survivors, the friends and family who saw another person die. By its very nature, the death and dying model must be anticipatory only. It is a model in which the person experiencing the change (death) must give up all hope of surviving the change.

The Kubler-Ross model is a well developed and useful tool when used for its intended purpose, to understand and explain the extremely intimate experience of impending death. However, the differences between the personal experience of death and an organizational change are so great that attempting to use it as such is presumptuous and requires considerable forcing of data for even a marginal fit.

Bereavement theory may be helpful in the understanding of the feelings of loss that accompany organizational change. This is not to say that bereavement theories may be used as models of organizational change, but that they may aid in understanding the personal dynamics of the change process. Because organizational change may entail loss, they help in the explanation and understanding of the change process. Although not applicable because of its specificity, the Kubler-Ross model is included in this review because of its prominence in the bereavement literature.

Stress and Coping

There is a vast amount of research on the topic of stress and coping. This section will present some basic definitions and research approaches which are useful in understanding how the model developed in this thesis fits within the literature.

Definition of Terms

Stress is commonly defined as the reaction to events that tax or exceed the adaptive resources of an individual or social system (Monat & Lazarus, 1985). Three types of stress have been identified: (a) systemic stress, which refers to physiological changes; (b) psychological stress, which deals with the cognitive response to threat; and (c) social stress, which deals with the disruption of social systems. Even among the experts in the field, there is little agreement on a precise or common definition of stress. Instead, stress may be best considered an area of study rather than a topic particular to any one discipline or theoretical position (Monat & Lazarus, 1985).

Coping refers to the efforts made by a person in response to perceived conditions of harm, threat, or challenge when an automatic response is not available. Changes in the environment may cause stress and require that new behavioral solutions be developed or that old behaviors be adapted to meet the new set of conditions (Monat & Lazarus, 1985).

There are a number of other, related terms which, though related to stress and coping, need to be distinguished and understood. Denial is the negation of something in word or in act. Some authors further distinguish denial from repression, in that the focus of denial is external to the person and repression refers to the negation of an internal or psychological reaction (Lazarus, 1985).

Denial and avoidance, though often used interchangeably, refer to two intertwined although distinct processes. If a person accepts that a particular state of affairs exists yet chooses not to deal with it, then this person is engaging in avoidance.

Denial and avoidance assume that, at some level, the person has knowledge of the situation. If a person does not understand the situation, then the person cannot be said to be engaging in denial, repression, or avoidance. The person may simply be ignorant of the facts. This poses a potential difficulty for researchers. Through observation alone, it is not possible to determine if a person is engaging in denial, repression, or avoidance or if the person is unaware of the situation.

In common usage, the term denial carries a number of negative implications. In connotes a loss of contact or avoidance of reality and is generally considered unhealthy or maladaptive. However, the stress and coping literature is congruent with an interpretive stance and conceptualizes reality as constructed rather than fixed. Thus, loss of contact with reality is a misnomer as there is no fixed reality. Furthermore, denial has been shown to have a number of beneficial effects (Lazarus, 1985).

Research Approaches

There have been two major approaches to the study of coping. The first approach examines whether the coping is problem-focused or emotion-focused. Problem-focused coping responses are those that attempt to alter the person-environment relationship by changing the environment. For example, a person engaging in problem-focused coping in relation to an anticipated organizational change may seek additional information about the change, form alliances with others, look for a more secure position or role, or attempt to conserve resources in preparation for the change.

A person engaging in emotion-focused coping might seek to alleviate the emotional impact of the change through relaxation, avoiding thinking about the change, exercise, taking drugs, or engaging in other behaviors to distance him- or herself from the impact of the change. Emotion-focused coping behaviors are palliative, as they do nothing to alleviate the cause of the stress but simply attempt to make the person feel better. They do nothing to reduce the threat.

The second approach examines coping behaviors as either dispositional, that is due to personality factors, or as a set of strategies to deal with stress. The dispositional approach assumes that each person has a set of general coping traits that are used when the person faces a stressful situation. These traits are somewhat fixed, and the person will respond to most stressful situations in a fixed manner. The coping traits are conceptualized as part of the person's overall personality and are assessed by personality tests rather than observation of the person's response to stressful situations. A person's coping style is inferred from personality testing. Monat and Lazarus (1985) note that these types of findings have been shown to have little generality and are poor predictors of an individual's behavior in response to stress.

Researchers who have concentrated on people's active coping strategies typically observe people's responses to stressful situations and then infer an underlying coping mechanism. Because it is difficult to observe people in the midst of a stressful event, research using this approach has concentrated on retrospective views of events and coping behaviors.

Coping is an iterative process. One does not simply cope with a situation and then move on. According to Lazarus (1985):

> People are constantly seeking a way to comprehend what is happening to them; this ongoing process of construing reality is a constantly changing one, depending on many variables within and outside of the person. Thus, when we consider denial, or any other kind of self-deception or illusion, we are dealing with flux, and we must always be aware of the slippery nature of the event we are trying to understand. (p. 162)

Recent research studies on job-related stress reflect a variety of approaches and viewpoints in relation to understanding the larger field of stress and coping. Studies of job-related stress have examined coping in terms of fight-flight responses (Mayes & Ganster, 1988), adaptive-maladaptive responses (Parasuraman & Hansen, 1987), approach-avoidance (Sharma & Acharya, 1989), and specific behavioral responses (Shonfeld, 1990: Kinicki & Latack, 1990).

Comparison and Summary of the Stress Literature with this Thesis

The findings of this thesis are largely congruent with the research on stress and coping. Although not specifically differentiated, all three types of stress (systemic, psychological, and social) were identified by participants in this study. This thesis focused on a broad model of individuals' response to organizational change, and as such, did not deal with the level of specificity and detail found in the stress and coping literature. The conceptualization of stress presented in this thesis, as a response to changes and the analysis of changes in the environment, is consistent with that of the stress and coping literature. Changes in the organization may be conceptualized as taxing or exceeding the resources of the individual, thus, creating stress.

The differentiation between denial, repression, and avoidance is not important to the model developed in this research, and all three may be seen as components of the coping actions identified as Individual/Self/Away (In/Se/–). Lazarus (1985) identified both costs and benefits of the denial process. Actions identified as Individual/Self/Away speak to many of the benefits of denial such as allowing the individual to continue to function in a stressful environment and to give the person additional time and psychological space to deal with the impending changes in the environment. The coping actions that this model identifies as Individual/Self/Against (In/Se/*) may also be seen as forms of denial but with a tendency toward the potential costs of denial such as delaying action to deal with an impending threat.

Ignorance of events was precluded from this model as the research required participants to identify the changes they thought to be significant. No event was construed to be more "real" than another.

This research examined the set of strategies individuals used to cope with change. Rather than inferring some underlying personality or coping structure, it presents a taxonomy to classify the strategies found based on the individual's retrospective view of events. It is unique in that it identifies three types of coping actions rather than two and in that it goes beyond individuals' responses to identify group actions.

Like the stress and coping literature, this model conceptualizes coping as an ongoing, iterative process. It assumes that people constantly scan and analyze the environment, become stressed, engage in coping actions, and then repeat the cycle for as long as time permits.

Management Science

The process of organizational change is not well understood and its study is somewhat new (Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1985; Feldman & Brett, 1983; Marks, 1982). The literature tends to focus on one organization or group of people; thus, the results tend to be very situational. For these reasons, there is little consensus regarding the overall process of organizational change.

Many articles were found that addressed topics relevant to the findings of this thesis. They came from journals primarily concerned with management and administration.

Job Insecurity

Most of the changes identified as significant by the people participating in this study represented threats to their jobs. Recent writings on job insecurity address this finding.

When their jobs become threatened, workers' main concerns are with prediction, understanding, and control (Hartley, Jacobson, Klandermans, & Van Vuuren, 1991). After reviewing the literature, Sutton and Kahn (cited in Hartley et al.,1991) concluded that humans naturally seek to anticipate future events, to understand the reasons the events occur, and try to control their outcomes. Lack of the ability to predict, understand, and control events leads to stress.

The anticipation of losing a job may be more stressful than the job loss itself. Rumors and gossip within the organization increase the level of stress

(Jacobson, 1991). When an individual faces a potential job loss there are some common concerns that arise:

> What does the future hold? Should I look for a new job or avoid possible failures by not trying? What am I good at? Should I move to another part of the country? How can I reduce my financial commitments? What sources of help can I rely on? (p. 29)

Jacobson goes on to say, when an individual is facing a potential threat to job security, the primary appraisal is determined by two questions: (a) "How much am I in danger?" and (b) "How much am I in danger from anything I do about the threat?" (Jacobson, 1991, p. 32).

Klandermans, van Vuuren, and Jacobson (1991) developed a model of how employees evaluate an anticipated threat to their job security. The appraisal is based on two factors: (a) the perceived probability of losing the job, and (b) the perceived severity of losing the job. The perceived probability is based on several factors, including the organizational climate, the level of trust the employee has in management, and the personal characteristics and position of the employee. The perceived severity of job loss is assessed through a personal examination of the values attached to the job (career, income, status, responsibility, self-esteem, and others) and the individual's perceptions of his or her occupational options. The greater the value attached to the job characteristics, the greater the perceived stress to the individual.

Jacobson (reported in Klandermans et al., 1991) theorized four different coping patterns to anticipated job loss. The four patterns are: unconflicted inertia, unconflicted change, defensive avoidance, and vigilance.

Unconflicted inertia is the response seen when individuals either do not feel at risk of losing their jobs, or they believe that the effects of the risk are small. Their response is to continue their usual behavior.

When the costs of taking action are perceived as low and the potential benefits of taking action are high, an individual may respond with a pattern of behavior termed unconflicted change. This pattern is characterized by actions designed to increase the individual's value to the organization, thus reducing the probability of job loss. This pattern also may include vigorous attempts to find other job opportunities, engaging in additional training and counseling, putting away extra funds for future support, and voluntary resignation. It may include engaging in political action to reduce the possibility of being fired and to minimize the effects if the job is lost.

Defensive avoidance is characterized by the individual removing him- or herself psychologically from the situation, and by avoiding cues to action. This pattern is identified by a disengagement from work, passive dependence on others to make decisions, and engaging in seemingly irrelevant activities.

When an individual perceives the potential benefits of taking action to be high, but the potential costs of action are also high, the pattern called vigilance will overcome the defensive avoidance pattern. The individual will not commit to any particular course of action, such as applying for a new job, but will engage in activities to help him or her constantly reassess the threat. They may pay more attention to the media, organizational communications, and rumors.

Jacobson's (1985) four-pattern theory has been criticized for several reasons, most related to the inability to distinguish among the patterns in any empirical manner.

Klandermans (1991) believes that coping actions may be reduced to two types: avoidance and active response. Active response can be further divided into two types: individual action and collective action. He concludes that, if an individual attributes the risk to employment as controllable and due to factors under the control of the individual, then the person will engage in individual action. If the risk is perceived as due to individual factors that cannot be controlled, then the person will engage in avoidance. If the threat to job security is perceived as due to organizational factors that are controllable, then collective action will be the mechanism of choice. If the threat is seen as organizational and uncontrollable, then avoidance will be the type of coping action.

Comparison and Summary of the Job Insecurity Model with this Thesis

The findings of this thesis largely support the job insecurity model. The three questions of prediction, understanding, and control, noted by Hartley (1991), correlate to the concepts of risk exposure (prediction) and event control (control). This thesis does not directly address the human need for understanding, although it is implicit in enviromental scanning and the process of social mediation. This thesis supports the idea that the evaluation of these factors results in stress.

Jacobson's (1991) contention that the anticipation of an event may be worse than the event itself is supported by this thesis. Many participants stated that they felt a sense of relief once the decisions were made and the waiting was over. There was no evidence, in this research, that the process of social mediation and rumors increased participants' levels of stress.

The questions quoted from Jacobson (1991, p. 29) are the same questions that emerged from this research. "What does the future hold?" is a question of anticipatory cost/benefit. "What am I good at?" "What sources of help can I rely on?" and "How can I reduce my financial commitments?" are the questions of anticipatory resource analysis.

There was little evidence developed in this thesis that individuals weigh the potential costs of taking actions. In retrospect, some statements could be interpreted as examining this issue, but they were infrequent and did not emerge as a major theme.

The concepts of "risk exposure" and "anticipatory cost/benefit analysis" closely parallel the factors Klandermans, et al. (1991) identifies as being used to evaluate job insecurity.

The 24 types of potential coping responses outlined in this thesis are comparable with those outlined by Jacobson (1991). Unconflicted inertia is congruent with not engaging in coping actions. Unconflicted change includes many of the coping actions described as moving toward self, others, the group, and the organization. Attempts to find other job opportunities are consistent with the mechanism described herein as moving away from the group or organization, and toward another group or organization. Mobilizing financial and socio-political resources is congruent with the concept of unconflicted change.

Defensive avoidance encompasses the idea of moving away from self, others, group, and organization. It also helps explain why some participants did not react, though they knew they faced potential risk.

Vigilance is an increased level of what this thesis identified as environmental scanning and social mediation.

Although this research study was designed to focus on individuals' responses to organizational change, group responses did emerge and were noted. These responses are congruent with the ideas of Klandermans', et al. (1991) on individual and group response. Though the data in this study did not support the strong connections to specific coping responses offered by Klandermans, there is nothing that discredits these relationships.

The findings of this study are congruent with the literature on job insecurity. Differences are largely a matter of specificity of response, and terminology. Though the data collected for this thesis do not support the strong relationships posited by other researchers, neither do they deny or negate these relationships.

The job insecurity literature, by definition, is concerned with people's responses in anticipation of a job loss. The theory developed through this thesis dealt with a longer timeframe.

The Identification of Significant Events

Many articles conclude that the recognition of significant organizational events varies by level within the organization, and that, in times of organizational uncertainty, managers concentrate more on departmental goals than on organizational goals (Cameron & Whetten, 1981; Dearborn & Simon, 1958; DeWitt & Simon, 1958; Ireland, Hitt, Bettis, & Auld de Porras, 1987). Conversely, Isabella (1988; 1990) found that the identification of events is relatively homogeneous across organizational levels.

This research found homogeneity in the identification of significant events. Participants at all levels and from all functions recognized the acquisition as a significant event. A number of associated changes were also identified as significant, primarily changes in management and reductions in the workforce. While most participants recognized the acquisition as significant, they went on to discuss the personal impact of the changes–how they were personally affected or how it affected their work group.

The acquisition and layoffs were fairly recent events, having occurred within the past two years. This may account for their prominence as significant events.

Coping Actions

As Greenhalgh (1982, p.156) stated, "All change threatens job security to some degree," therefore, it is not surprising that members of the organization focused on how the identified events would affect them or their work group. Job security was perhaps the predominant theme when people discussed change events. Almost all of the events were tied back to the topic of job security. The acquisition, promotions, and changes in location were all construed as a possible threat to continued employment. There was also strong evidence that people do become more parochial in times of uncertainty, as evidenced by groups moving toward themselves, isolating themselves from others, or concentrating on their function and allowing others to fail. Individuals focused on their own concerns, rather than those of the organization, although there were some exceptions. Generally, those who moved toward the group or identified more closely with the organization and organizational goals were those who had fewer options available to them. This is consistent with Cameron and Whetten's (1981) findings. They did not perceive themselves as having the education or skills that would allow them to find comparable employment outside the organization.

A number of other studies reported coping actions similar to those developed through this research. Feldman and Brett (cited in Bettenhausen, 1985, p. 270) stated, "At this point very little is known about how the socialization practices of an organization evoke individual coping strategies, or how individual coping strategies influence organizational socialization programs." Greenhalgh's (1979) and Perry's (1984) conclusions, regarding workers' coping actions in response to anticipatory job loss, support the coping actions this thesis identified as "individual away from organization" and "individual away from group." Brockner, Grover, Reed, DeWitt, and O'Malley (1987) reported that survivors of organizational layoffs became demotivated when they identified closely with those who lost their jobs. This is congruent with the coping action identified as "individual away from the organization."

Both Cameron and Whetten (1981) and DeWitt and Simon (1958) reported that, in times of organizational uncertainty, people would emphasize achieving effectiveness at less aggregated levels of the organization, a finding that supports the "individual toward group" coping behavior reported in this thesis.

Stress

Participants in this study were quite vocal about the levels and effects of stress related to organizational change, particularly stress related to job insecurity or job loss. Whereas the data from this study cannot be used to calculate dollar amounts, it was clear that employee stress was expensive to both the organization and the individual. As stress resulted in an increase in social mediation, it is not surprising that productivity was reported to have decreased. This is congruent with many other reports regarding the effect of stress on productivity (Greenhalgh, 1979; Greenhalgh, 1982; Leana, 1988; Levin, 1984).

Justice

Many participants in this study spoke about the "fairness" of the identified changes. Their assessment of the fairness was a major factor in determining their attitude toward the organization after the event. This concern with justice is supported by the literature (Adams, 1965; Brockner, Davey, & Carter, 1985; Brockner, Davey, & Carter, 1986). Brockner, et al. (1987), in a review of the literature regarding justice and survivors of layoffs, identified four themes used to assess justice: (a) the legitimacy of the layoffs, (b) how the layoff notice was given, (c) how it was decided who would be laid off, and (d) how those laid off were compensated. The participants in this study asked the same type of questions regarding the fairness of changes. Brockner specified two typical coping responses of survivors--to distance themselves from the people being terminated and to distance themselves from the organization. Both coping actions were identified during this study.

Summary

The findings of this study are well supported by previous research. The theory developed helps fill the gap between the broad theories of organizational psychology and the specificity of the bereavement literature. As many participants spoke about layoffs and job loss as major outcomes of organizational events, it is not surprising that the theory that emerged is similar to those found in the job insecurity literature. As the author was unaware of the research on job insecurity until the end stage of this thesis, it was particularly gratifying that the derived model resulting from this research so closely paralleled earlier findings.

The model developed in this thesis is unique in that it goes beyond the stages of anticipation and coping. The coping actions matrix is congruent with other research findings and is unique in that it offers a high level of specificity in the classification of coping behaviors.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter reviews the findings and model of organizational change developed through this research. Constraints of this research are noted and directions are suggested for future research.

Summary of the Findings and Model

The purpose of this research was to develop a model of how individuals identify, evaluate, and respond to organizational change. Twenty-nine members of a manufacturing organization were interviewed to learn about their experiences with organizational change. A grounded theory approach was used to analyze the data, and a model of the change process was constructed.

Organizational change was conceptualized as having three time periods: the anticipatory interval, the event interval, and the postevent interval.

The anticipatory interval was defined as the period of time between the recognition of a future event as potentially significant and the start of the identified event. Members of the organization constantly scanned their environment for information about events. They attended to the media, as well as formal and informal methods of communication within the organization, and they spoke with each other. Once an event was identified by a person as significant, it was analyzed on several dimensions. People evaluated their risk exposure, that is, the probability that the identified event would affect them. They evaluated their event control--how much control they had to influence the course of the event. They conducted an anticipatory cost/benefit analysis, seeking to determine what they had to gain and lose should the event occur.

They also analyzed the resources they had available to help them deal with the event.

Based on this anticipatory analysis, people experienced stress and took action to change their level of stress, either directly or by acting to change their risk exposure, event control, cost/benefit analysis, or resource analysis.

Twenty-four types of anticipatory coping behaviors were identified. People moved toward, away from, or against themselves, others, groups, or the organization. Additionally, group actions toward, away from, or against themselves, an individual, other groups, or the organization were found. While engaged in these types of coping actions, participants constantly reevaluated their risk exposure, event control, cost/benefit analysis, resources, and level of stress. This analysis–action cycle could continue until the start of the event. The length of the anticipatory interval determined how much time was available to analyze and cope with significant events.

The event interval was defined as the time between the start and end of the identified event. Many participants reported that the anticipation of an event was more stressful than the event itself, a finding congruent with other research. Some events were very easy to identify, whereas others stretched out over a long period of time with no well defined start or end point. People sought a sense of closure--they wanted some tangible evidence that an event had taken place. If such evidence was lacking, many felt unsettled. In some cases, the participants created symbols or ceremonies of their own to mark the event.

The postevent interval was defined as the period of time between the end of one event and the recognition of another significant event. During this interval, people reviewed the past event and judged its affect on them. They looked back and assessed their risk for being affected by future changes, how their level of event control had changed, what they actually gained and lost as compared to their anticipatory analysis, and what resources they now had available for future use. They also assessed the fairness, or justice, of the event. This assessment of justice played a large part in determining how they felt about the event, the other people involved in the event, and the organization. This postevent interval ended when another potentially significant event appeared on the horizon and it became more important to plan for a future event than to review a past event. The cycle would then repeat.

Although this model was presented in a logical, well-structured sequence, this was done only for clarity. It treated an identified "significant event" as if it existed in isolation. This is not, in fact, the reality of organizational change. No event happens in isolation; each event affects other events; and this all happens within a complex and evolving social system. To understand the richness of the organizational change process, change must be considered in toto, not as a set of disjointed events.

In our society, the rate of organizational change is increasing. This means that people have less time to prepare for and evaluate the changes. Therefore, they have little opportunity to take actions to control their stress. As noted in Chapter 1, this stress extracts a heavy price from the individuals and from the organization.

Implications

It seems unlikely that much can be done to reduce the rate of organizational change, given the social, economic, technological, and demographic forces at work in our society and the world. Therefore, if the goal is to reduce the personal and financial costs individuals and organizations incur because of change, then the best course of action is to make the change process less stressful.

The model developed in this thesis is a step toward that goal. It helps explain the process and mechanisms by which people identify, evaluate, and cope with organizational change. Although it does not predict how any given individual or group will respond to a particular change, it does provide a basis for understanding the process they use in evaluating the event. As such, it is a tool to help manage the change process. If the process is understood, then both individuals and managers can make more effective decisions when facing organizational change.

As this model is confirmed and its transferability becomes established, it may be used to guide the organizational change process. Management may use it to predict and prepare for the effects of impending change. It may help management decide how to announce future change events, how to prepare the work force for the event, and what reactions to expect. Most importantly, it may help management recognize that there will be responses to anticipated change and that these responses, although uncomfortable, are normal and are to be expected. It will also give direction to efforts to reduce the stress and costs of the change process.

Workers may use the model to understand their own reactions and the reactions of those around them. It may also help them understand management's concerns and behavior in preparing for change. In addition, it may give them a common framework to evaluate change and to discuss it with management and peers--that is, it may be used as a common language about the change process.

Constraints

While the results of this thesis largely confirm, and are confirmed by, other writings, this is only one study. Additional studies, in other organizations and industries, are needed to confirm and expand the transferability of this model. The most constraining factor of this study is that, with few exceptions, all the participants had survived the identified change events. This is limiting as it does not allow for an understanding of the full spectrum of experience concerning organizational change. Many people did not survive the organizational changes identified in this study. They left the company, either voluntarily or were laid off. The experiences of these people are not included in this thesis. The experiences of the people who did not survive is needed to develop a more comprehensive model of the organizational change process.

Within the past few years a large number of immigrants have been hired by the organization. They were not included in the research as they had not been with the organization long enough to have experienced many of the significant change events. It is clear that they form a large part of the organization's work force and are a distinct subculture within the organization. Future studies will need to include this group.

This research was conducted in an organization with a traditional hierarchical structure. Additional studies should include other types of organizational structures to determine if the dynamics are similar.

Much of the research on job insecurity cited in this thesis was conducted overseas. The model created through this thesis also needs to be tested in other nations and cultures.

Directions for Future Research

Additional research is needed to confirm and expand the model developed in this thesis. The experiences of people who have left an organization because of changes must be included to complete the model. Without this information, this is a model of the organizational change process as seen by survivors of the change. While it is thought that the process is the same for survivors and nonsurvivors alike, this needs to be addressed by additional research.

Additional studies need to be conducted, to support or modify the model, in different organizations, industries, locations, and cultures. This study required participants to recall past events and describe how they reacted. Future studies might attempt to capture the experiences of participants as the events are unfolding. Unless the investigator is internal to the organization, this type of study might present some challenges in securing access to participants; however, the resulting information would be valuable in providing additional information about how people react to changes in an organization. Additional studies will make the model more comprehensive in scope, further establish its credibility, and increase its transferability to other situations.

Now that this model of the organizational change process has been developed, future research may concentrate on the relationships between the identified variables. Many relationships were suggested by this study, but there is not sufficient evidence to include them as a part of the model.

There appears to be a direct relationship between the anticipatory risk exposure and level of perceived stress. This is logical and not surprising. Those who believe they will be affected by a change experience more stress than those who believe they will not be affected.

The relationship between event control and stress has already been noted. Those with either high event control or very low event control experience less stress than those who are unsure of their event control or who believe they have some limited control over the event. Those with high event control believe that they are able to change the course of the event to minimize the loss they may incur. Those with very little event control believe that, because they cannot do anything about the event, there is little to be gained by worrying about it. Those whose event control is unclear or somewhere in the middle believe they do have some control over the change event, yet they are unsure of their ability to minimize any potential losses. They cannot predict what will happen as a result of their efforts to change the course of an event. It seems logical that any actions they take could actually increase any potential losses, therefore, they feel increased levels of stress.

Logic dictates, and the interviews tend to confirm, that those who believe they have much to lose will feel more stress than those who have little to lose. To repeat an old truism, there are none so free as those with nothing left to lose. If a person has nothing to lose, then change can only bring gain. Somewhat paradoxically, those with the most to gain from a change event also experience increased levels of stress. If benefits are expected, the uncertainty of change means that there is the potential that they may not come to pass. Potential loss of anticipated benefits may be considered a loss. In The True Believer, Eric Hofer (1951) states that mass movements are not the products of those at the extreme ends of society. The very poor and the very rich are not the people who start and engage in large-scale social movements. It is the people in the middle class who get involved in mass movements and social causes. It would be very interesting to examine the effect of anticipatory cost/benefit analysis in relation to the coping actions taken by members of an organization.

The level of stress experienced by a person appears to be inversely proportional to the level of resources the person believes are available. Resources seem to decrease the impact of anticipated losses. People with marketable skills or financial backing will experience less stress when facing a change event than those who believe that they do not have marketable skills or who have little financial security.

It also seems reasonable to expect that there is a relationship between the perceived level of stress and coping actions taken to deal with the stress. It is expected that greater levels of stress would result in a greater number of coping actions, although this relationship is highly speculative and needs further investigation.

The interrelationships between these variables are not understood and require further research. For example, how do the variables of event control and resource analysis interact in relation to perceived stress? It would seem that at some point there is a trade off; additional resources compensate for low levels of event control and reduce the perceived stress.

Additional research is also needed regarding the effect of the length of the anticipatory, event, and postevent intervals on perceived levels of stress. For some changes, a prolonged anticipatory interval seems to be associated with lower levels of stress because the people involved have time to prepare and engage in coping actions. In other cases, a prolonged anticipatory event seems only to prolong the anxiety, and people become more stressed or dysfunctional as they wait for the event. Do certain types of change require a long anticipatory interval for less stress to be felt by the members of the organization? For what types of change events does a short anticipatory interval result in lowered levels of stress? How can these changes be identified and classified? Are there relationships between the components of the anticipatory analysis and the length of the anticipatory interval? For example, are people with low levels of event control affected differently than people with high levels of event control in relation to the length of the anticipatory interval? Similar questions may be asked about the length of the event and postevent intervals.

Many questions may be asked about the choice and effectiveness of the various coping actions. How do the variables and outcomes of the anticipatory analysis affect the choice of anticipatory coping actions? What coping actions are most effective in moderating the level of stress, under what conditions, and why are they effective? What is the affect of these various actions on the organization's health and performance? What is the influence of age, tenure, salary, and family status on stress? When is access to information about a change event helpful and when does it increase stress? When should management release, and when should it withhold, information to minimize individual and organizational dysfunction?

If the results of controlling the flow of information to members of an organization can be predicted, then an entirely new set of questions regarding the ethics of managing the organizational change process must be addressed.

What should be done if actions that would minimize an individual's stress are not congruent with the organization's best interests?

Conclusions

The study of organizational change is new, and many have called for continuing research into the dynamics of the process (Daft, & Weick, 1984; Isabella, 1988; Passmore, 1987). This thesis is a step toward developing a more comprehensive and accurate model of the process. It is hoped that it will be the first step in a long line of inquiry into the nature and process of organizational change, and that others may find value in the model for their research and management needs.

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Appendix A

Distribution of Participants by Organizational Level, Function, Gender, and Product Group.

Organizational Level	Functional Area	Gender	Product
Executive	Human Resources	Male	
Sr. Management	Data Processing	Female	
Sr. Management	Materials	Male	
Sr. Management	Scheduling	Female	
Executive	Quality	Male	
Executive	Manufacturing	Male	A
Sr. Management	Manufacturing	Male	A
Executive	Sales	Male	
Administrative Support	Human Resources	Female	
Sr. Management	Human Resources	Male	
Administrative Support	Data Processing	Male	
Office Support	Human Resources	Female	
Professional	Manufacturing	Male	A
Engineering	Manufacturing	Male	B
Sr. Management	Materials	Male	
Professional	Manufacturing	Male	E
Professional	Physical Plant	Male	
Sr. Management	Manufacturing	Male	C

Organizational Level	Functional Area	Gender	Product
Production	Manufacturing	Female	D
Administrative Support	Physical Plant	Female	
Production	Manufacturing	Female	A
Sr. Management	Physical Plant	Female	
Professional	Manufacturing	Male	B
Administrative Support	Scheduling	Male	
Production	Scheduling	Male	
Professional	Manufacturing	Male	B
Production	Manufacturing	Female	C
Production	Manufacturing	Female	C
Production	Manufacturing	Female	B

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Introduction

My name is Barry Johansen, and I'm a graduate student at the University of Minnesota in the Department of Vocational Education.

I'm collecting information for my dissertation which is on the topic of organizational change. I'm particularly interested in learning why people often find change so difficult.

As someone who's seen a lot of change in this company, you're in a unique position to describe the changes and the effect they've had on you and others.

I hope to meet with between 25 and 30 people. The information I gather from all the people will be combined in my final report. Nothing you say will ever be identified with you personally. Even the name of the company will be kept anonymous.

I'd like to tape record our conversation so I don't miss any of the things you have to say. I don't want to rely on just my notes as I won't be able to keep up with the conversation, and I might accidentally change your words somehow. I will have the tapes transcribed for review. The only people who will have access to the tapes and transcripts will be myself, my research advisors, and, of course, the typist. So if it's OK with you, I'd like to use this recorder. If at any point you wish to turn it off, just reach over and press this button.

The University is also very concerned about protecting the rights of people who agree to help with research. In fact, they have a formal system of review for each proposal. This sheet [ethics protocol] reviews your rights. It repeats some of what we've already discussed and explains some other points. [Read, sign, & file]

As we proceed, if you have any questions about why I'm asking something, please feel free to stop me and ask.

The purpose of our conversation is to learn about your insights regarding changes in the company and how you, and others, have reacted.

Any questions before we start?

I. The first set of questions is about your job and history with the company. The purpose is to help me understand how different types of people look at changes in the company.

  A. What is your present position and title?
  B. What level position is it? [exec/mgr/super/direct labor]
  C. How long have you been in this position?
  D. How long have you been with the company?
  E. Please describe your major responsibilities.
  F. Walk me through a typical day; what do you do?
  G. What do you enjoy most about your job?
  H. What do you enjoy least about your job?

II. The next set of questions has to do with what you consider to have been the major changes in the company over the past five years. I'm trying to learn what changes people feel are the most important. Let's start by just making a list of the changes, then we'll go back and discuss them.

  A. Looking over the past five years, what do you consider to have been the most significant changes for the company?

B. Which were the most significant for you personally?

III. This next set of questions is about the changes you identified. People react to change in various ways. This part of the interview is aimed at learning about how you and others reacted to the changes.

A. Let's start out with the change you said was most significant. When did you first suspect that it was going to happen?

B. Where did you get your information?

C. Describe your first "gut" reaction.

D. When people face such a change, they often have a number of fears, some rational, some irrational.

What fears did you have about the change?

Tell me about some of your irrational fears.

E. What would it mean if your greatest fear came true?

F. How would your life be different?

G. What would it mean to you personally?

H. What effect would it have on your family and friends?

I. Who did you talk with about the change?

J. What did you say?

K. What did you do to prepare for the change?

L. What did you do differently?

M. What things did you avoid doing?

N. What things did you do differently away from work?

O. How did other people react to the possible change?

P. What changes did you notice in their behavior?

Q. How were they feeling about it? How did you know this? Please give some examples.

R. What would have made them feel more comfortable at the time? What effect would it have had?

S. What could have been done to make you feel better at the time?

When the change happened,

A. How did you learn that it had actually occurred?

B. What was your first emotional reaction?

C. What thoughts were going through your head at the time?

D Where did you go for answers?

E. Did you get your questions answered?

F. How helpful were the answers?

G. What effect did the answers have on you?

H. Earlier we talked about the things you liked about your job [enumerate a few].

What was the effect of the change on these things?

I. We also spoke about some of the things you don't like so much.

How did the change affect these things?

J. Right after the change occurred, what was the mood in the company?

K. How did others react?

- What did they talk about?
- What were they worried about?
- Did you notice any change in their behavior?
Give examples.

L. What was the overall impact on the company?

Give examples.

Now, in retrospect,

A. What still concerns you about the change?

B. When people talk about it now, what do they say?

C. How do you feel about it now?

D. What helped you get through it?

E. If you knew then what you know now, what would you have done differently?

  - What difference would it have made?
  - What could have been done to make it easier for others?

IV. In Closing

A. Anything else you would like to add or mention?

B. Is there anything we didn't discuss about this change that's important?

C. Anything we need to go back and discuss further?

D. Is there anything else I should understand to really appreciate the effect of the change?

Appendix C

Ethics Protocol/Informed Consent

(To be read by the interviewer before the beginning of the interview. One copy of this form will be left with the respondent and one copy kept by the interviewer.)

My name is Barry Johansen. I am the principal investigator on a project entitled "_____________." This project is my doctoral thesis project through Training and Development at the University of Minnesota. I may be reached at 645-0925 (home) or 624-3719 (work) should you have any questions, comments, or concerns. My advisor is Dr. Gary McLean who can be reached at 624-4901.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project. Your participation is very much appreciated. Before we start I would like to reassure you that as a participant in this project you have several rights.

First, your participation is entirely voluntary.

You may refuse to answer any question at any time.

You are free to leave the interview at any time.

This interview will be kept anonymous and the information we discuss will be available only to myself and my research advisors at the University. They, too, will keep all information anonymous

Excerpts of this interview may become part of the final research report, but under no circumstances will your name or identifying characteristics be included in this report. Neither your name nor the name of your organization will be mentioned in the study.

This interview is being tape recorded to ensure that I am accurate in gathering information. This tape will not be shared with anyone except my research advisors and a transcriber. You may ask that the recorder be turned off at any point in the interview. The tape will be erased upon the completion of the project.

I would be grateful if you would sign this form to show that we have discussed its contents and that you are aware of your rights and how I will use the information.

__________________________ signed

__________________________printed name

__________________________date

Appendix D

Story Line

People in organizations are always scanning their environment looking for events that might be important. This scanning takes many forms. People talk to each other about events, talk to people outside the organization, listen to what management has to say (and does not say), read the papers and periodicals, listen to the radio, and watch television. When a potentially important event is identified, they evaluate it in terms of how it could affect them. This all goes on within a very complicated social system, and these potential events are discussed with others, both at work and away from the workplace.

The potential event is evaluated from a number of perspectives. People try to determine if the event will affect them. They estimate how much control they have over it and make a determination of what they have to gain or lose if the event does come to pass. They judge the fairness of the potential event and whether it makes any sense to them. They will review and estimate what personal resources they have to help them deal with the event. These resources may include money, skills, friends, family, interests, and political connections.

Depending on how the potential event is evaluated, a certain amount of stress will be generated. For most people, this stress alone is enough to prod them into action. Others need a little extra "push" to get them moving. Stress is uncomfortable, and people will engage in actions to reduce it, either by directly addressing the stress itself, or by trying to change the balance of the factors they used to make their initial evaluation.

There are a number of types of actions people can take. They can deal with the stress directly. They can accept the change, try to run away from it, or do some rather unhealthy things like use alcohol or drugs. They might try to change the probability that the event will affect them by changing the odds. They might try to increase or decrease the likelihood that they will be affected by the change. They might try to do some things to give them more or less control over how the event happens. Often they will do things to decrease any potential costs brought about by the event. They might do things to gain as much as possible from the event. They might use some of their resources to help them prepare for the event. For example, they might start contacting people in their social network, maybe make some assets a bit more liquid, or attempt to improve their skills.

These actions take a variety of forms which can be characterized as being "toward," "away from," or "against." People who are moving toward themselves can be characterized as maintaining a healthy attitude toward themselves. If their stress is extreme, they deal with it by finding psychological support from friends and family or by engaging in physical activity.

People who move away from themselves deny the stress and emotions that accompany the potential event. They try to ignore it and hope it will go away.

People who move against themselves interpret the change as a reflection of their personal shortcomings and feel that they are to "blame" for something happening, especially if they fear a great deal of loss. They deal with the stress by engaging in unhealthy behaviors such as overworking or taking drugs.

People also move toward, away from, or against other individuals. By moving toward others, people attempt to find support or security by bonding with another, a "We'll-get-through-this- together" attitude.

In moving away from others, people take an "I-don't -want-to-associated-with-you-because-you're-a-loser" approach.

Or people actively move to subvert another individual in the hope of increasing their own security by endangering that of someone else.

The same three directions of action apply between individuals and groups. People try to increase or decrease their identification and ties to groups, depending on how they feel such actions will affect them in relation to the potential change. They even decide to work against the group if they think it might help them.

The same types of actions are taken with regard to the overall organization. People move toward the organization, embracing the mission and goals of the organization, becoming more of "a company person." Or they move away from the organization, in some cases quite literally by finding another job. People can, of course, take active steps against the organization. This is why so many organizations are so security conscious when people are fired or have other reasons to be angry with the organization.

Not only are these dynamics seen in individuals, but there is evidence that groups take the same types of actions. A group might move toward itself, that is, "pull together" for the common good. It might move away from itself and deny that it is a group; or it might even move against itself and its members actively work against each other.

A group moves toward an individual by inviting the person into the group; or it moves away from an individual by preventing the person from joining. A group that works against an individual is particularly troublesome if the individual is the manger.

Groups can also move with regard to other groups. One group moves toward another group, perhaps to consolidate their efforts. Or one group distances itself from another and draws clear lines of distinction between "them" and "us." Or one group attacks another, perhaps by making coordinated efforts to undermine the other group.

Finally, groups can move toward, away from, and against the overall organization. A group can attempt to foster the organizational goals, maybe by working harder or by doing a better job; or it can move away from the organization and divorce itself from the organization, the organizational goals, and identity. It might actually work in opposition to the overall organization. This happens when the group becomes very cohesive and perceives itself as more important than the entire organization. Although this last case is rare, it has been reported in the literature.

After they have taken some action, people will then reevaluate where they stand with respect to the potential change. Depending on how they feel about the situation, they might take additional actions or do nothing further. Of course, much of what they can do is dependent on the amount of warning time they have. The more warning, the more time to evaluate and act.

At some point the event actually happens. For some changes it is a fairly distinct happening. For example, if there is a layoff, one day you have a job, the next day you don't. Or in the case of a takeover, one day you work for Company A, the next day, Company B. Some events and changes are not so easy to pinpoint, such as the gradual change in production rates or the implementation of a new corporate philosophy. There is a need for some sort of ceremony or symbolic action to acknowledge that a change has taken place. It gives people a sense of finality and that it is time to move on. For example, when someone gets a promotion, he or she might be called up to the boss' office and congratulated. Maybe a memo goes out telling everyone of the person's new status. Or, if the change is a new technology, a person becomes very aware of it when the new machine lands on the desk. It is more difficult when there are major changes but little evidence that anything has happened. For example, in a takeover, people still drive to the same building, park in the same place, go in the same door, see the same people, and do the same work. Yet they are told, indeed they know, that they now work for another organization. This dissonance is problematic. They are expected to play by a new set of rules, but there is very little evidence that anything has changed. There are things organizations can do to help with this transition by creating evidence or creating some sort of symbol that lets everyone know that the change has taken place.

After a change has happened, people look back and evaluate the results in relation to their preevent assessment. Are they at risk for further events because of this one? What control do they have over the future? What did they actually gain and lose? Have their available resources changed? Was the change fair and just? Justice is a very big issue and will set the tone for future judgments about changes and the organization. There is also evidence that people try to find meaning in the event. That is, what does the event mean in the overall scheme of things?

The amount of time between significant change events plays a role in the final evaluation of the event. Often people are so inundated with changes that they do not have time really to reflect on the events. What affect this has is something to consider in the future.

This model treats changes as if they were well ordered and linear. Nothing could be further from the truth. The model is presented in such a manner for clarity and for understanding. In actuality, no change happens in isolation. There are many changes going on all the time, some very significant, some not so significant. It is the interactions among all the concurrent changes that makes prediction impossible. Plus, the workplace is not the only place where change is happening.

The purpose of this model is not to show a cause-and-effect relationship between the variables, but to offer an explanation of the many variables and relationships that go into determining how events are recognized, evaluated, and managed by the people who go through them.

Appendix E

Author's Biography

The information in this brief biography is intended to give the reader additional insight into the background of the author. As all research is dependent on the experience, bias, and history of the researcher, it is hoped that this brief history will assist the reader in understanding the process and product of this thesis.

I've lived within 10 miles of the University of Minnesota all my life. I'm the oldest of six children and am the only member of my family to attend college. Both of my parents completed high school. My siblings all completed some type of vocational training. Both my parents worked as I was growing up. While I was in high school, my father held a full-time job at the railroad plus two part-time evening jobs. My mother worked part-time. Despite the long hours and physically demanding work, I can rarely remember my parents complaining. They espoused a firm belief in the value of work.

I grew up believing that I could never develop any manual skills. I was told that I needed to learn to "work with my head" because I'd never be able to use my hands to earn a living. These beliefs fit nicely with the practice of tracking in high school. In high school there were three tracks. College prep was for the best and the brightest. The second track was for students who planned to go into business. Vocational courses were for the rest. Convinced that I had little talent with my hands, I actively avoided any vocational or "shop" courses. The school system demanded a minimum number of vocational courses which I met by taking typing classes and one quarter of print shop. As I had not been trained to work with tools or had the opportunity to develop any manual skills, I was frequently unsuccessful in my efforts to build or repair things. This reinforced my belief that I had no manual skills. It was only after I became a homeowner that I was able, through necessity, to develop some of these skills.

Throughout my years at the University, both as an undergrad and graduate student, I've had to work to support my education. My family made too much money for me to qualify for financial aid and too little for them to offer me much financial assistance. During my first two years of college I worked as a janitor. At the end of my sophomore year I decided to major to psychology and, about the same time, got a job in the locked adult psychiatric unit at the University Hospital. I worked there for three years until I finished my undergrad degree. In this time I had daily contact with people experiencing a wide variety of emotional problems, from loneliness to full psychotic episodes. Although I did not recognize it at the time, one of the biggest concerns that people had when planning to leave the hospital was in finding a job.

I left the hospital to work in a private behavior modification clinic while finishing a post-baccalaureate certificate in behavior analysis. At this clinic I learned to use biofeedback systems to teach people how to relax. I was laid off after six months. This was my first experience with unemployment. I was somewhat surprized I was able to find another job within a few weeks and the experience was not particularly very painful.

Based on my experience with biofeedback equipment, I was hired to work in a hospital as a monitoring technician. It was here that I learned a lesson in organizational politics and discrimination. I had worked myself into a position where I supervised five technicians. Two of the techs were women. Through a series of events my supervisor fired both of the women. The women grieved the firings on the basis of sexual discrimination. I supported one of the woman's grievance. A hearing concluded that there was no sexual discrimination; the women lost and so did I. Although there were no formal repercussions, it became clear that I had lost favor within the department. Any potential for further advancement or development within the organization was gone.

I quit the hospital and took a job at a halfway house for chronically mentally ill adults. Again, I was struck by the struggle these people went through to find and hold a job. Many of them had to learn very basic skills necessary to find and maintain a job. They had to be taught to get up on time, how to maintain acceptable personal hygiene, how to dress for work, how to ride the bus, and how to budget their money. I stayed with this organization for three years at which time I was recruited to join a manufacturing organization as an engineer. The company needed someone experienced on a particular type of computer system, the same system I had used while a monitoring tech.

I worked as an automation engineer building robotic and machine vision systems for manufacturing applications. The first two years were very good as the industry was strong. The last two years were marked by drastic swings in the business climate which caused many changes in the organization. I managed to survive two rounds of layoffs before I was told my job was being eliminated. I had seen other people lose their jobs and saw their pain as they were forced to find other positions. Then I went through the same experience. At first, unemployment was almost fun as I had time to do things around the house. Soon, however, it became very uncomfortable. Financially we were OK. My wife had a good job and was able to support us without too much difficulty. We needed to cut back on a number of non-essentials but were able to meet our obligations. However, as time passed and I was unable to find a job, I became more and more unhappy. Although the people at the unemployment office were helpful and pleasant, I found applying for unemployment benefits embarrassing and, in some ways, humiliating. Every two weeks I had to check-in and prove I had been looking for work or I would not receive my unemployment benefits. I remember the anger and feelings of dehumanization as I would stand in line for hours, waiting for my number to be called. Then, five minutes with a case worker and I was out the door. I'm now embarrassed as I recall my feelings toward the others who waited in line with me. Most of them were much worse off than me. Many were dirty, smelled of alcohol, and had an unkept appearance. Why did I, someone who had almost finished his master's degree, have to wait in the same line with these people? Wasn't I somehow better than them? Of course, the truth is I am not any better, not now, not then. Indeed, my needs were probably much less than those of others. A painful lesson to be sure.

I also started to have serious doubts about my own value and my own skills. I would apply for job after job and get the rejection letters two weeks later. Maybe I didn't have any worthwhile skills. Perhaps I was not worthwhile as a person. Maybe there was something wrong with me. All these years I had managed to survive by conning people and now they had finally found out about me. In retrospect I see these feelings and beliefs as irrational but, at the time, they were my reality. To make matters worse, I had nowhere to focus my anger and no one to blame except myself. I would become hostile, depressed, and sullen. This was a tough time for my wife as well.

After nine months I did find a job in hospital management. Six months later I was laid off again. At this point I decided to return to school full-time to work on my Ph.D. Fortunately I was able to secure a graduate assistantship.

While working on my degree I did a summer-long internship with the Metropolitan Waste Control Commission. This is the organization that is responsible for the collection and treatment of sewerage for the seven county metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul. I didn't really know what to expect when I took the job except that I was to develop a number of task analysis and skill lists for some of the people who worked to maintain the sewer system, the Interceptor Service Workers. I had the same visions of sewer work that many people have--Ed Norton (not a very bright fellow), rats, insects, strong odors, filth, and rough men doing back-breaking labor. What I found was quite the opposite.

To develop training for Interceptor Service Workers, I needed to learn about their work. To do so, I had to become an Interceptor Service Worker. I went with them 8 to 10 hours per day and they taught me how to do the work. I learned how to clean out sewer lines, how to maintain pumps and filters, how to repair valves, how to run powerful generators and pumping stations, and how to interact with the public. Rather than a gang of rough men, I found the Interceptor Service Workers to be a diverse group of men and women who were bright, talented, funny, and who truly enjoyed their work. While there is a certain amount of dirt and odor associated with the work, it would be more accurately characterized as technologically complex. The Interceptor Workers have to be able to operate computerized pumping stations, monitoring equipment, complex biological filtering systems, and high voltage generators. Even though I was a "college boy" they accepted me and helped me learn the full scope of their work. Working with these people helped me better understand the value of vocational skills and the diversity of talents needed in a complex society. It also made me more aware of how I value others and others' work.

Now I am again facing imminent unemployment. As I will no longer be a student, I can no longer be a graduate assistant. And, although I look forward to new challenges (and a living wage), I am feeling the loss of leaving my friends, mentors, and the security of my position at the University. I've identified the future event and I'm in the midst of my anticipatory interval, analyzing the potential outcomes, coping as best I can, and feeling the stress. Friends and family have asked me how I feel about earning my degree and my time at the University. I try to explain my thoughts and feelings but doing so is difficult and the answers are still shifting. Maybe I'll be able to do a better job postevent.